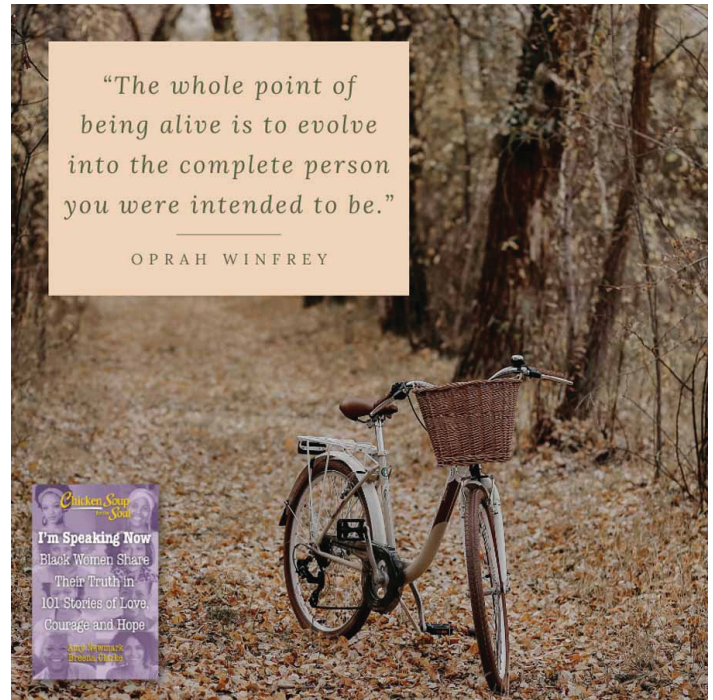


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LWR projects), potluck, 1:30 p.m.  
First Round of Football Playoffs: Groton Area at Elk Point/Jefferson, 6 p.m.

## Friday, Oct. 20

Senior Menu: Scalloped chicken, carrots/broccoli medley, pineapple tidbits, Gingerbread with topping, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Bagel bites.

School Lunch: Mac and cheese, cooked carrots.

End of First Quarter

Volleyball at Redfield (C/7th at 5 p.m., JV/8th at 6 p.m. with varsity to follow)

## Saturday, Oct. 21

Thrift Store open 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Catholic: SEAS Confession, 3:45-4:15 p.m.; SEAS Mass, 4:30 p.m.

State Cross Country Meet at Yankton Trail Park, Sioux Falls

Robotics at Douglas High School

## OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

The recycling trailer is located west of the city shop. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.

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## Wednesday, Oct. 18

Senior Menu: Scalloped potatoes/ham, peas, Mandarin orange salad, whole wheat bread, Ambrosia.

School Breakfast: French toast.

School Lunch: Cheese stick with Marinara sauce.

United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.; Groton Ad Council, 7 p.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Confirmation (service event), 6 p.m.; League, 6:30 p.m.

Groton CM&A: Kids' Club, Youth Group and Adult Bible Study begins at 7 pm

## Thursday, Oct. 19

Senior Menu: Swiss steak, mashed potatoes, cauliflower, apricots, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Muffins.

School Lunch: Taco salad.

Emmanuel Lutheran: WELCA (final day to pack

**Groton Daily Independent**  
**PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445**  
**Paul's Cell/Text: 605-397-7460**

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## The Bulletin by Newsweek

### World in Brief

on exports of advanced chips designed by Nvidia and others to China as part of curbs aimed at stopping Beijing from importing cutting-edge U.S. technologies to strengthen its military.

Reuters reported that the U.S. military intercepted two drones before they could strike its forces in Iraq, citing two U.S. officials. It comes as the U.S. is on high alert amid rising violence in the U.S. and elsewhere over the Israel-Hamas conflict.

Social media platform X, formerly Twitter, begins testing a new program called 'Not a Bot,' in New Zealand and the Philippines. New users will be charged an annual subscription fee of \$1 for features like posts, likes, and interaction with other posts.

Donald Trump watched his New York civil trial as appraiser Doug Larson called the statements of Trump's financial condition inappropriate and inaccurate. Accountant Donna Kidder testified about the Trump Organization's bookkeeping practices.

Brazil's ex-President Jair Bolsonaro was the mastermind of "a willful and premeditated attempt to stage a coup" following his 2022 defeat, a congressional report on Jan. 8 riots noted, proposing four charges against him.

In the ongoing war in Ukraine, Ukrainian strikes on Russian targets in eastern and southern Ukraine—which used longer-range ballistic missiles fired from Army Tactical Missile Systems donated by the U.S.—have destroyed at least nine Russian helicopters, dealing a blow to Moscow's air assets..

### What to Watch in the Day Ahead

Data on housing starts and building permits for September at 8:30 a.m. ET could provide clues on the health of the housing market in the current high mortgage rate environment. The Federal Reserve's Beige Book, which provides regional economic conditions, is due at 2 p.m. ET.

Financial sector companies, including Morgan Stanley, State Street, Northern Trust and Nasdaq, electric vehicle maker Tesla and video-streaming pioneer Netflix are scheduled to report their third-quarter results..

### TALKING POINTS

"I want to assure you that Israel cares more about the Palestinian population than Hamas ever did... The reason why we're referring to this not as another round of conflict between Israelis and Palestinians is because we have a very direct distinction between Palestinian civilians, the Palestinian Authority who governs the West Bank, and the Palestinian Hamas terrorist organization who rules Gaza since 2007," Israeli diplomat Maya Yaron in an interview with Taiwanese broadcaster Sanlih as her country prepares for a large-scale ground offensive in Gaza.

"Bill Ford knows exactly how to settle this strike. Instead of threatening to close the Rouge, he should call up Jim Farley, tell him to stop playing games and get a deal done, or we'll close the Rouge for him. It's not the UAW and Ford against foreign automakers. It's autoworkers everywhere against corporate greed. If Ford wants to be the all-American auto company, they can pay all-American wages and benefits," UAW President Shawn Fain said after Ford Executive Chair Bill Ford called for an end to the ongoing union strikes.

"I'm not in any way frightened of dying. That doesn't worry me. It's never worried me from the beginning, but I would be annoyed. I'd be annoyed because there are things I still want to do. Very irritating, dying. But I'm not afraid of it," Jurassic Park star Sam Neill on his battle with stage three blood cancer.

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## Conde National League

**Oct. 16 Team Standings:** Giants 17½, Cubs 17, Braves 12, Tigers 10, Pirates 9, Mets 6½

**Men's High Games:** Russ Bethke 181, Aaron Severson 181, Steve Hargis 177, Austin Schuelke 173, Ryan Bethke 173,

**Men's High Series:** Ryan Bethke 510, Austin Schuelke 467, Russ Bethke 465

**Women's High Games:** Suzi Easthouse 211, Vickie Kramp 173, Nancy Radke 165

**Women's High Series:** Suzi Easthouse 535, Joyce Walter 457, Vickie Kramp 445

## Prelude to War

Dear Friends:

Attached is the second Excerpt I promised. This is provided from the first chapter - 1940 Prelude to War.

In addition to the use of newspapers, obituaries and various other source material, I have included a verbatim account of assorted entries from my grandmother's diary. The book will introduce each month from 1940 through 1945 with my grandmother's diary entries. My grandmother was a farmer's wife who raised two children, my father Donley who served during World War II and my aunt Beth a few years younger than my father. Grandma Inez was married to Ralph. I have tried to enable the reader to follow her life through her own words and often will provide some narrative that might assist you in understanding what she is talking about. Lots of things in farming life have changed in these 80 years. I hope you enjoy that. Obviously anything I provide you is limited.

The excerpt starts on the next page.

Lee Raines  
512 644 6061

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## 1940 – Prelude to War (Excerpt)

*January 1940 – Diary – New Years Day, cold. Made a cake and rolls. Took the pipes down in the kitchen. January 2 15 degrees below. Cleaned up the house. Helped Ralph start the car. Don, Beth and Ralph went to the show. January 3 Don went to school and Ralph and I took Beth to have her eyes checked in Pipestone. January 5 Beth and I cleaned the whole house. Ralph, Beth, and Joyce went to town in the PM and went skating. January 6 cleaned up the whole house. Went to Pipestone in the morning. Beth got her glasses \$14.95. Ralph, Beth, and Don went to town in the PM. Made Beth a housecoat. Got the material in Pipestone \$1.05. Listened to the radio in the evening. January 8 Ralph sold six sows to Jay Bennett \$.05 a pound. January 7 Beth and I went to Sunday school and church. Kids went skating in the afternoon. Cold. January 8 washed, had a big load. Got most of them done. Ralph sold hogs \$.05. January 9 ironed all afternoon. Got done and mended in the evening. Don went to Coleman to play basketball. January 10 cold and windy. January 11 cleaned the house. Ralph sold six sows to Jay Bennett \$.05 a pound. January 12 Beth went skating and Don played basketball at Egan. January 13 washed dishes and made a cake. Took Don up to see Doctor. He tested my blood and Don's too. Took a bath in the evening and cleaned up the house before I went to bed. January 14 made a cake and rolls. Beth went to Sunday school. January 15 Ralph sold the lambs at Morrell's \$8.75 each. Weighed 94 pounds. Made almost \$400.00. January 18 very cold – 30 below. Don and Beth didn't go to school. Don's bus did not come. We rendered lard all day. January 19 sold 18 pounds of lard at \$.10 per pound. January 20 cleaned the house. Made a cake. Folks went to town. January 21 went to Sunday school. January 22 washed. Hung the whites out. January 23 sick in bed all day. Washed the dishes and let the family get the meals. January 24 sold three dozen eggs to Ada Bennett for \$.15. January 25 cleaned up the house and did my ironing. Went to dance at the Temple in the evening. Very cold. January 26 Beth went to Sunday school party. January 27 went to doctor. Sick all night. Don played basketball and Beth and Ralph went to show. January 28 made a cake and did our Saturday work. Did not go to church. January 29 washed the dishes, left the rest of the work. Went to see Dr. Boyd \$5.00. Had my stomach pumped and had an x-ray. Got home at noon. Ralph hauled manure. Swell day. January 31 cleaned up the house as usual. Sewed a little. Didn't do much but rest. Cleaned the cistern.*

**January 1** – In the expectation of intensified land warfare, informed sources today foresaw possible increase of the British army to 2.5 million men. A royal proclamation expected early in the year is to provide registration of men from 23 to 28 adding about 1 million men to the 1.5 million now under arms, or technically mobilized. Arrival of a second contingent of Canadian troops at a western British port was announced today. Artillery units from Winnipeg and Montreal, engineers from Toronto and Halifax, kilted Scottish regiments, infantry brigades and ambulance units were included. First Canadian troops reached Britain December 18, and Australian aviators and Indian troops arrived later.



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**Nazi Ready to Meet or Attack Foes** – Powerful German reinforcements were reported pouring into Norway and Denmark without resistance today, strengthening the Nazi grip on new strategic bases in the north from which the mighty German air force already has struck its first blows at the combined British French fleets.

Germany's thrust into Scandinavia has brought her within striking distance of control of the third largest fleet of oil tankers in the world.

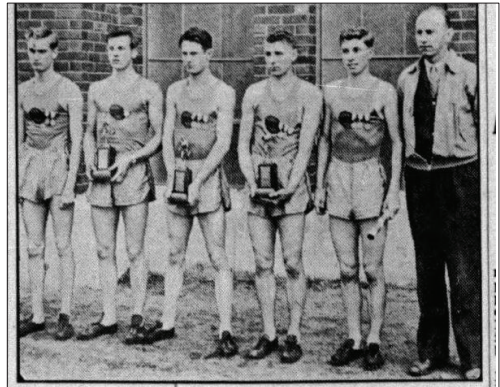
**April 20** – Leo S. Ries of Andover, pleaded guilty to grand larceny before Judge Van Buren Perry at Webster and received a sentence of two and one-half years in the penitentiary at Sioux Falls. Ries appeared before D.C. McLean, justice of the peace on Tuesday for a preliminary hearing after he and a minor youth also of Andover were arrested for allegedly stealing 17 chickens from the farm home of Lloyd Cavanaugh on the night of April 12 while the Cavanaugh family was attending a community club meeting. The pair admitted to the theft of eight chickens and on Tuesday, the minor companion of Ries was taken before Judge I.S. Coomes, juvenile judge, who sentenced him to the state reformatory until he becomes of age. He is 16 years old. **Eight days elapsed between the crime and sentencing. Compare that to Ed Van De Brake from Andover who drew an eight-month sentence in the state penitentiary after pleading guilty to burglary in the third degree. Van De Brake pleaded guilty to stealing 110 bushels of oats. 110 bushels of oats versus stealing chickens. Leo S. Ries, U.S. Army, entered the Army in July 1942 and was discharged September 30, 1945. He was born February 10, 1912, died July 18, 1989, and is buried in Watertown.**

*May 1940 – Diary – May 4, did the usual cleaning and made a cake. Beth and I went to Pipestone. Took 72 dozen eggs, got \$.16 a dozen for 27 dozen and \$.14 for the rest of the eggs. Got wallpaper for the living room \$4.00. Went to town in the evening (Flandreau), Don and Beth went to the show. May 5 Mr. Luhrmann docked the lambs. May 7 was election day. Beth didn't have school; we went to town, and I had my hair fixed. Ralph was busy throughout the first part of the month dragging and discing for corn and started to plant corn May 10. Finished planting corn on May 15. Beth and I went to eighth grade graduation. Beth graduated with an average of 91. May 28 we finished our work early. Beth and I went to Sioux Falls. Beth got a dress for \$3.00, and I got curtains for \$2.25. May 29 did the usual work. Don painted the screen door, Beth the pump. I painted the back door. Ralph and Don hauled manure. Swell day. Next day, did the usual cleaning. Men sheared the sheep. Don gave me a box of candy for mother's day.*

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**May 7** – “They’re a great bunch of boys who have been willing to work hard,” was Coach Perry Doney’s explanation for Groton high school’s surprising clean sweep of Class B relays in the Dakota Relays here (**Sioux Falls**). Left to right: Lyle Potter, Walter Insly, James Honey, Clarence Abeln, Willard Dodge and Coach Doney. They are shown with their Dakota Relays trophies and medals. Competing in the class for high schools between 100 and 250 enrollments, Groton won the half-mile, mile, and sprint medley baton-passing events. Insly ran the half-mile in the medley while the other four, trained for shorter distances, took care of all other assignments. **Lyle Potter died in Portland,**



**Oregon in 2008. He served in the Army Air Corps from February 23, 1943, until November 9, 1945. James C. Honey, U.S. Navy, was discharged from the Navy on February 21, 1944. He was born January 24, 1921, and died April 28, 2017, in Sylmar, CA. James Honey also worked for Lockheed Aircraft Company in Los Angeles, CA during the war years. Clarence Abeln as a young man was an aviation enthusiast operating his own flying school in Aberdeen. He also was a pioneer photographer for the Agricultural Association in South Dakota. He was a veteran of World War II serving with the U.S. Navy as a commander of a flight training squadron and later served two years in the Bureau of Aeronautics in Washington DC. He was also a retired employee of Fairchild Aircraft and had been a technical writer for Grove Manufacturing of Waynesboro, PN. He died June 25, 1990, and is buried in the Groton cemetery. Willard Dodge, U.S. Navy, AOM3, was born July 6, 1921, and died July 13, 2018. He is buried in the Black Hills National Cemetery in Sturgis.**

**May 10** – Germans use blitzkrieg warfare to sweep through the Low Countries of Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands, with the ultimate objective of conquering France.

**How Armies Compare: Men Under Arms – British Empire - 2.5 million; France – 6 million; Netherlands - .4 million; Belgium - .6 million; Luxembourg Unknown; and Germany – 9 million.**

**June 4** – Dunkirk falls to the Germans after more than 330,000 Allied soldiers are evacuated from the French port to England. **Dunkirk is on the northern border of France and is six miles from the Belgian border. At that time, it was the third-largest French harbor. During the Battle of France, the British Expeditionary Force (Britain’s army) along with the French and Belgian armies became outflanked by the Germans and retreated to the area around the port of Dunkirk. More than 400,000 soldiers were trapped in the pocket as the German army closed in for the kill. Unexpectedly, the German Panzer attack was halted for several days – a critical error. After the war, it was determined that the commander halted the attack to allow maintenance on his tanks, half of which were out of service, and to protect his flanks which were exposed. This lull gave the British and French a few days to fortify their defense. The Allied position was complicated by a Belgian surrender on May 28. Now there were only the French and British forces in Dunkirk. Operation Dynamo was launched by Winston Churchill when he ordered any ship or boat available, large or small, to collect the stranded soldiers. 338,226 men (including 123,000 French soldiers) were evacuated – the miracle of Dunkirk, as Churchill called it. It took 900 vessels to evacuate the British soldiers, with two thirds of those rescued embarking via the harbor and over 100,000 taken off the beaches. More than 40,000 vehicles as well**

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as massive amounts of other military equipment and supplies were left behind. Forty thousand Allied soldiers were captured or forced to make their way home through a variety of routes including via neutral Spain. Many wounded who were unable to walk were abandoned.

**June 14** – Paris falls to the Nazis, as General Maxime Weygand's forces on the northern border are overwhelmed. French officials had fled the city, and the Germans entered unopposed.

**July GI 11** – Indications that the steady decline of the birth rate is leveling off were read into school census figures for Brown county announced by Miss Genevieve Arntz, county superintendent of schools. The number of persons from six to 21 years of age, declined only 76 during the past year, compared to losses of 207 and 187, respectively, in the previous two. There were 8,367 persons within this age group in Brown county this year, compared to 8,443 in 1939, 8,650 in 1938 and 8,837 in 1937. Thirty-one, nearly one-third of the county's 91 school districts, reported increase over last year. Aberdeen had 4,685, a loss of 17; Groton 230, a loss of 4, and Hecla 209, a loss of 16. 1940 figures for each district follows: Aberdeen 4,685; Groton 230; Claremont 97; Stratford 84; Barnard 90; Hecla 209; Frederick 154; Westport 111; Columbia 115; Bath 115; Warner 42; Verdon 39; Ferney 38 and Houghton 69. **Of these schools listed in 1940, only Aberdeen, Groton, and Warner still have high schools/grade schools. All of the rest have been closed or consolidated with another. Imagine this small enrollment and compare it to the military involvement of both men and women. Hard to imagine that these small enrollments could eventually generate over 600 World War II participants.**

**September 15** – 16.5 million men, 21 to 35 years old, inclusive, must register on a day to be fixed by the president, perhaps early in October. 75,000 are expected to be mustered into service in November for a year's training. A total of 400,000 conscripts are due to be in training early in January 1941, others later. The bill places a 900,000 limit on the number of conscripts in the army at any one time. Exemptions and deferments to be granted to men with dependents, ministers, theological students, men in essential occupations, certain government officers, aliens, the physically unfit and conscientious objectors. The later (sic) are liable for non-combatant training. Draftees to receive \$21 a month for the first four months and \$30 subsequently, with opportunity for raises. Industries balking at filling government orders can be taken over on rental basis.

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Selective Training and Service Act – An independent federal agency in the U.S. created to administer the military draft nationwide to conscript troops quickly in the event of war. Founded in September 1940, the Selective Service System oversees the military registration of all draft-age males (that is, age 18 through 25) and manages the Alternative Service Program for individuals classified as conscientious objectors (persons who object to war because of their moral or religious principles). The Selective Training and Service Act of 1940, signed into law by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, created the country's first peacetime draft. With Europe already engulfed in World War II and Japan making threatening moves in the Pacific, Roosevelt wanted to strengthen the unprepared U.S. armed forces. On the following October 16, more than sixteen million men between the ages of 21 and 36 registered for a year of military training and service. Thirteen days later, October 29, a blindfolded Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson reached into a giant glass bowl to draw out number 158, designating the first class of draftees – “winners” in a national lottery without monetary payoff or cause for celebration. I have provided my father's registration card. My grandfather also registered for the draft but was too old to be called in. Notice the phone number 1881. My father's signature never really changed in all those years.

REGISTRATION CARD—(Men born on or after January 1, 1922 and on or before June 30, 1924)		
SERIAL NUMBER N 122	1. NAME (Print) DONLEY WAYNE RAINES	ORDER NUMBER 10700
2. PLACE OF RESIDENCE (Print) Groton, Groton, S. Dak.		
3. MAILING ADDRESS Hilandrean, S. Dak.		
4. TELEPHONE 1881	5. AGE IN YEARS 18	6. PLACE OF BIRTH Walt, S. Dak.
7. NAME AND ADDRESS OF PERSON WHO WILL ALWAYS KNOW YOUR ADDRESS Ralph Raine, Hilandrean, S. Dak.		
8. EMPLOYER'S NAME AND ADDRESS		
9. PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT OR BUSINESS		
I AFFIRM THAT I HAVE VERIFIED ABOVE ANSWERS AND THAT THEY ARE TRUE.		
D. S. S. Form 1 (Revised 6-1-42)	616-21530-3	Donley Raine

*October 1940 – Diary – October 2 went to the show in the evening “Coming Round the Mountain”. October 3 Ralph plowed. Don went to Brookings in the evening to a FFA officers meeting. October 4 Ralph sold 7 lambs in Sioux Falls. Weight 110, \$8.85 at Morrells. Also sold 1 ewe. Ben Miller hauled them. October 5 got a new pair of hose. Paid \$.79. October 6 fried out lard. October 7 Ralph plowed and began picking corn. October 11 took the kids to the football game in the evening. October 12 did the usual cleaning. Made a cake and raised donuts. Don, Ralph, and I went to the show. Beth took a music lesson. Ralph and Don picked corn for the pigs. Ralph got a new hat for \$3.00. October 14 – 30 Ralph picked corn. October 16 Beth washed the dishes. I went over to the schoolhouse to help with the draft registration. Dick Herbert, Chairman and Roy Smith the other judge. October 19 Ralph helped Valentine's shell corn. October 23 finished sewing Beth's jacket and pressed it. Ralph picked corn. Don went to a party given by the Ag boys for the Home Econ girls. I went to town with him. Went to the show afterwards. October 24 Ralph picked corn and I got two friers (3 ½ pounds) and a pumpkin. October 25 cleaned the whole house, dressed two chickens, made two pumpkin pies, cookies, and sewed. Don and Beth went to the football game and party. Ralph took them. Beth came home with Wayne McNeil. Ralph went to the show. October 26 got up at 6:00 am and fried two chickens. Went to Brookings to Hobo Day. October 27 Ralph and Don*



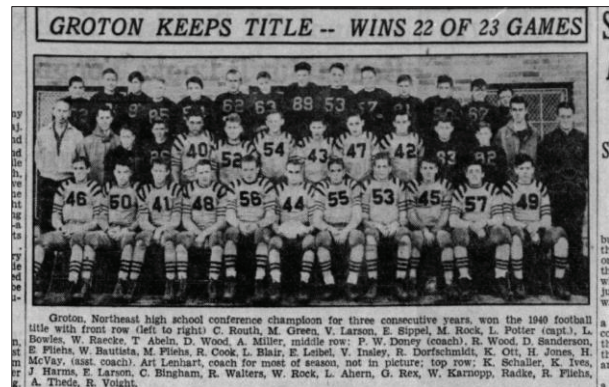
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*sorted out the ewes. Washed a big washing with the "machine". October 31 Ralph picked corn. I made bread, two pumpkin pies, cookies, and a batch of fudge.*

In November 1940, local commanders of the various units of the South Dakota National Guard received the following telegram: *The president has ordered all federally recognized elements of the 147<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery of the National Guard of the United States and of the State of South Dakota and all personnel, both active and inactive national guard assigned thereto, into the active military service of the United States effective 25 November 1940, orders mailed.* Throughout the state – at Sioux Falls, Mitchell, Vermillion, Parker, Yankton, Pierre, Flandreau, and wherever individual guardsmen were located – the orders suddenly brought a realization that the United States was indeed gridding (sic) itself for possible conflict. It was a hurried mobilization, impacting dramatically on families, farms, and main-street businesses. Then days after the call-up date, the regiment was enroute to Camp Ord, California, the main body traveling by train while vehicles with guns in tow carried armament and other equipment westward.

**November 19** – Groton High School yesterday won the Northeast Conference championship over Webster by beating this rival in their game postponed from Armistice Day 25 to 6. Had Webster won they would have tied for the title. Groton's only defeat this season came at the hands of Ipswich, runner-up in the Central South Dakota Conference. It broke a winning streak of 19 games. The Groton high school Tigers became champions of the Northeast Conference for the third consecutive year when they clinched the 1940 title by crushing Webster. **List of players: Cecil Routh, Manley Green, Virgil Larson, Emery Sippel, Mathieu Rock, Lyle Potter (Captain), Lynn Bowles, Terrence Eugene Abeln, Don Wood, A. Miller, Robert Wood, D. Sanderson, E. Flihs, Wayne Bautista, Marvin Flihs, R. Cook, Lyle Blair, Eugene Liebel, Vere Insley, Harvey Dorfschmidt, Kenneth Ott, Howard Jones, H. McVay (assistant coach), Kenny Schaller, Kenneth Ives, J. Harms, E. Larson, Darrell Bingham, R. Walters, William Rock, Charles Ahern, G. Ries, Wallace Karnopp, Harlan Radke, R. Flihs, Allan Thede, Robert Voight.**



Little did the coaches and players know that within five years, some of these players would be gone. Killed in action during World War II. Vere C. Insley, PFC, U.S. Marines from Putney was killed in action July 21, 1944, in Guam. He was a member of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Marine Division. Wallace Karnopp, U.S. Navy, Seaman First Class, entered the service on March 28, 1944, and was lost at sea when the USS Hull where he was assigned, sank during a typhoon on December 18, 1944.

## Tigers take down Northwestern in four sets

Groton Area took four sets to shake off Northwestern with intense volleyball action played Tuesday in Groton. The Tigers won the match, 3-1.

The first set was tied 11 times and there were six lead changes in a game that went extra points. The Tigers trailed, 24-20, but came back to tie the game at 24. Northwestern still had the one point lead at 25 and 26 before the Tigers got the lead 27-26. The set was tied at 27 and the Tigers scored the last two points for the 29-27 win.

In that set, Anna Fjeldheim and Sydney Liecht each had five kills while Rylee Dunker had two kills, a block and an ace serve, Chesney Weber had a kill and an ace serve, Elizabeth Flihs had two kills, Carly Guthmiller had two ace serves and Emma Kutter had a kill. Ashley Haven led Northwestern with two kills and two ace serves while Adriana Ratigan had three kills and Ella Boekelheide had two kills and an ace serve.

The second set was tied eight times and there were six lead changes. Groton Area had a seven point rally to take a 16-10 lead, but the Wildcats came back to take an 18-17 lead. Northwestern would score the final six points for the 25-21 win. Rylee Dunker led Groton Area in that set with four kills and two blocks while Chesney Weber had four kills, Anna Fjeldheim and Laila Roberts each had two kills, Sydney Liecht had a kill and an ace serve, Emma Kutter had a block and Carly Guthmiller had an ace serve. Ashley Haven led Northwestern with four kills and a block, Adriana Ratigan had two blocks and a kill and Nicolette Nickeson had two kills.

The third set was tied only five times with just two lead changes in the early part of the game. Groton Area led after it was tied at seven, taking a 13-10 lead and a 17-11 lead en route to a 25-20 third set win. Chesney Weber led Groton Area with eight kills and an ace serve, Anna Fjeldheim had two kills and an ace serve, Rylee Dunker had two kills, Emma Kutter had two blocks, Sydney Leight had a kill and an ace serve, Carly Guthmiller had an ace and Laila Roberts had a kill. Ella Boekelheide led Northwestern with three kills while Adriana Ratigan had two blocks and a kill, Sophia Troske had two ace serves and Nicolette Nickeson and Ashley Haven each had two kills.

Ashley Haven had a powerful fourth set for the Wildcats as she powered in nine kills to put Northwestern on top for much of the set. Northwestern jumped out to a 6-0 lead, but Groton Area came back to tie it at nine and took a 10-9 lead. Thereafter, the set was five times and there were two lead changes. Groton Area trailed, 24-19, but came back to tie it at 24 and took a 25-24 lead. The set went extra points as it was tied at 25 and 26. Northwestern had mistakes down the stretch with being over the net at least two times, but the final points came from Northwestern when they were charged with someone being out of rotation and Groton Area won, 28-26. Anna Fjeldheim and Chesney Weber each had four kills in that set while Sydney Leight and Rylee Dunker each had three kills, Emma Kutter had a kills and Carly Guthmiller and Elizabeth Flihs each had an ace serve.

For the match, Chesney Weber was 38 of 39 in attacks with 17 kills and was 10 of 11 in serves with three ace serves. Anna Fjeldheim was 49 of 56 in attacks with 13 kills and had two ace serves. Sydney Leight was 31 of 37 in attacks with 10 kills, was 16 of 18 in serving with three ace serves and led the team in digs with 38, and had one solo block. Rylee Dunker had 11 kills, one ace serve and two assisted and one solo block. Carly Guthmiller was 22 of 23 in serving with five ace serves, had four assists and 29 digs. Emma Kutter had two kills and two solo and one assisted block. Elizabeth Flihs had 46 assists, 16 digs, two kills and one ace serve. Laila Roberts had three kills.

Overall, Groton Area was 94 of 99 in serving with 14 ace serves, 181 of 208 in attacks with 55 kills, had 119 digs and seven blocks. Northwestern was 95 of 96 in serving with nine ace serves, 186 of 204 in attacks with 53 kills, had 117 digs and 14 assisted and one solo block. Northwestern had 20 net violations on the night.

Ashley Haven was 76 of 83 in attacks with 22 kills, was 13 of 13 in serving with two ace serves and had four assisted blocks.

The game was broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM, sponsored by Agtegra, Bary Keith at Harr Motors, BK

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Custom Ts & More, Bierman Farm Service, Blocker Construction, Dacotah Bank, Full Circle Ag, Groton Ag Partners, Groton Chamber, Groton Ford, John Sieh Agency and Locke Electric.

Northwestern won the junior varsity match, 2-1. Groton won the first set, 25-14, lost the second set, 25-14, and lost the third set, 15-11. Jaedyn Penning led Groton Area with six kills and an ace serve, Kella Tracy had six kills, Tali Wright three kills and three ace serves, Faith Traphagen two kills, McKenna Tietz a kill and an ace, Emerlee Jones, Jerica Locke, Chesney Weber and Hanna Sandness each had an ace serve and Taryn Traphagen had a kill. The junior varsity match was broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM, sponsored by Gordon and Dorene Nelson.

Groton Area won the C match, 25-21 and 25-14. Emerlee Jones, (whose fans sponsored the broadcast on GDILIVE.COM) led the Tigers with nine kills and three ace serves, Taryn Traphagen had eight kills, Liby Althoff had four ace serves and three kills, Leah Jones, Teagan Hanten and Hannah Sandness each had a kill and Ashlynn Warrington had an ace serve.

- Paul Kosel

## Region 1A Ratings

#	Name	Season			Seed Pts
		W	L	PCT	<u>PTS</u>
1	 Aberdeen Roncalli	17	5	.773	44.091
2	 Groton Area	16	4	.800	43.737
3	 Milbank	18	11	.621	41.690
4	 Sisseton	9	13	.409	39.682
5	 Redfield	9	14	.391	39.261
6	 Webster Area	10	14	.417	38.583
7	 Tiospa Zina	7	16	.304	37.522
8	 Waubay/Summit	1	21	.045	34.318

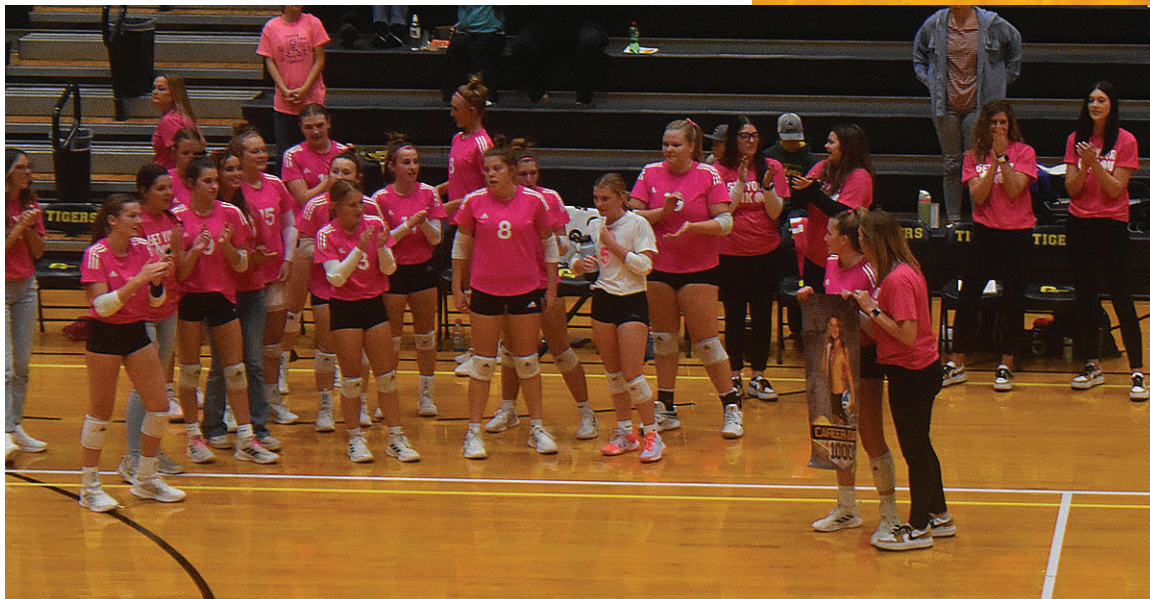


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**Sydney Leicht**  
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)

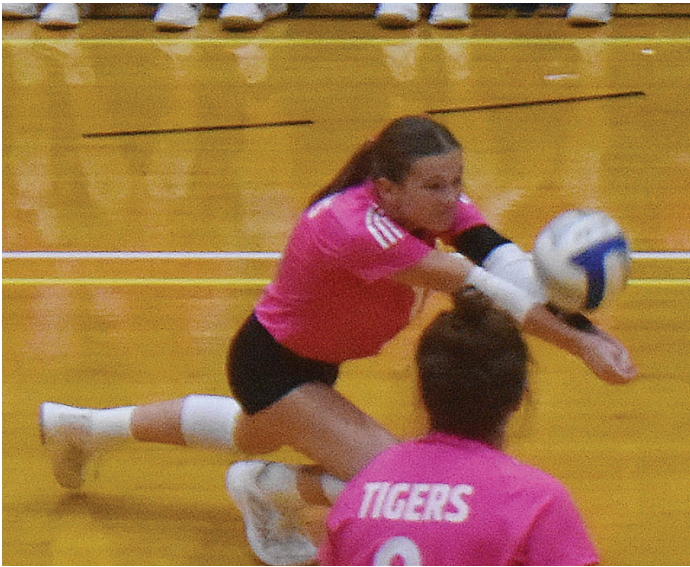


**Sydney Leicht**  
awarded with  
her 1000th dig  
at the North-  
western match.  
(Photo from Regan Leicht's  
facebook page)



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**Anna Fjeldheim**  
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)



**Elizabeth Flihs**  
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)



**Laila Roberts**  
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)



**A sea of pink after the match.**  
(Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)





## Schwan awarded Innovator of the Year Award

According to Google there are 151 school districts in South Dakota...

Joe Schwan was nominated and selected as the 2023 innovator of the year! Though the South Dakota Superintendents Association.

Being in leadership is hard... being a leader through Covid was hard... someone recognized his leadership and took the time to submit it.

\_ Jodi Schwan

## 'Groton Tiger Week' proclamation, budget priorities take stage at City Council meeting

by Elizabeth Varin

**It's Groton Tiger Week!**



Groton Mayor Scott Hanlon signed a proclamation this week honoring the Groton Area High School Girls' Soccer Team after the team's appearance at the state championship. The proclamation was presented to Head Coach Chris Kucker and players Mia Crank and Kennedy Hansen.

While the proclamation names the state championship appearance, it also includes Groton Area High School's superior standings in athletic and academic student participation programs, the district's fine example in its role as an educational institution and the community support.

The week of Oct. 15 to 21, 2023 was named Groton Tiger Week in the city.

**Groton Mayor Scott Hanlon, Groton Area High School Girls' Soccer Head Coach Chris Kucker and players Mia Crank and Kennedy Hansen pose with the proclamation declaring Oct. 15-21, 2023 as "Groton Tiger Week."** (Photo

by Elizabeth Varin)

Budget priorities discussed

The City Council reviewed budget requests from different city offices, including potentially \$315,000 for a new electric metering system.

A growing number of the city's current electrical meters are not able to be read remotely, and city staff have to check those meters in person. And the problem seems to be getting worse almost daily, said City Finance Officer Douglas Heinrich.

"They're reaching their end of life," he said. "Give it another four or five years, and the batteries start to go. And we'll be in the same shape with water meters."

Other options besides spending more than \$300,000 were discussed, including searching for grant funding or testing out a few new electric meters to see how well they work.

Other big ticket requests include setting aside \$100,000 (\$50,000 in 2024 and another \$50,000 in 2025) for a new concession stand at the baseball facility, the city park saferoom/restroom facility, summer salary increases based on minimum wage changes, and other wage and cost of living increases.

The City Council can always change the budget mid-year if priorities shift or funding sources change, Heinrich said.

The list presented to the council doesn't include potential public works projects, as those lists will become available in the next few weeks, he said.

### **Resident wants to cut red tape**

Groton resident Greg Heilman asked the council to cut out the red tape and call him if there's an issue at his property.

Heilman received a letter in May about branches on his property at 105 North Fifth Street and a foundation in disrepair. However, he said, the issues could have been resolved with a simple phone call.

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"If you're going to send out notices, you have to at least let me know what's in disrepair," he said.

After receiving the notice, Heilman said he called Councilman Brian Bahr and had the issues resolved within 24 hours.

"Can we throw this away, and put this to bed, or are there other concerns that need to be addressed," he asked. "... A simple phone call would have put this to bed a long time ago. I don't think we need to waste money sending attorney letters out. That's taxpayers' money."

City Attorney Drew Johnson replied, though, that issues still remain at the property.

"That place over there is a pit," he said. "The neighbors over there don't have to live next to that."

Mayor Scott Hanlon said there are issues here and there around town, and the council is just trying to make everybody happy and keep the town looking good. He added that if there is a continued issue at Heilman's property, the city will call to discuss it with him.

- A new plan is in place to better the ice skating rink surface. The city will take a grader to the area the rink is, take out vegetation and layers of dirt until it reaches clay, pack it down and bring in water to freeze. It should help with issues that happened last year, when organic matter decayed and gasses caused pockets to form on the ice surface, said Councilman Jon Cutler. However, if the area were graded, and inches of ice covered the clay, it should be a better situation. "We have to try something," Councilman Brian Bahr said.

- Farmland surrounding the Groton Airport will be leased to Shawn Gengerke Farms after the City Council finalized a two-year lease agreement. Bids were opened Sept. 19, but the council met in executive session earlier in the month to discuss whether to extend the lease, as per a request from the bidder. Councilman Jon Cutler asked the council to consider extending the leases in the future, as two years doesn't give a farmer much time to fertilize and improve the land for crops. "If you would have extended it to three or four years, I think it would have been unfair to the rest of the people who bid," he said. However, he added, it would be worth the time to send a letter to those who bid and see if they would prefer a four- or five-year lease.

- The council approved blocking a portion of Main Street for the downtown trick or treat event from 4 to 6 p.m. Oct. 31.

- Water rates will go up effective Nov. 1 after the council approved the second reading of an ordinance to raise the rates. The rate increase was prompted by Web Water increasing rates to the city in October.

- The council approved renewing liquor and wine licenses for city businesses, including package off-sale liquor and retail on-sale liquor for Jungle Lanes & Lounge; package off-sale liquor and retail on-sale liquor for American Legion Post No. 39; package off-sale liquor for Ken's Food Fair; retail on-sale liquor for Red Horse Inn; retail on-sale liquor for Olive Grove Golf Course; retail on-off sale wine and cider for Dollar General; and package off-sale liquor for MJ's Sinclair.





## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### **South Dakota ranks fourth in payments from conservation program**

BY: SEARCHLIGHT STAFF - OCTOBER 17, 2023 11:35 AM

South Dakotans are the fourth largest recipients this year from a federal program that pays agricultural landowners to keep environmentally sensitive land out of production, according to a news release from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The program, known by the abbreviation CRP, pays landowners to maintain grass, trees and other plant species on enrolled acres, which helps prevent soil erosion, filters runoff that enters waterways, and establishes habitat for wildlife.

The program also helps fight climate change. Some farming practices can release plant and soil carbon into the atmosphere as carbon dioxide, where it acts as a heat-trapping greenhouse gas. Consistent plant cover pulls carbon dioxide out of the air and stores it in the soil.

"We're grateful to all CRP participants who are making a tremendous difference by proactively addressing climate change and conserving natural resources now and for future generations," said U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack in the news release.

Nationally, the program has paid \$1.77 billion this year to 667,000 participants for 23 million acres, which equates to about 36,000 square miles. Nationwide program enrollments are up 21% since 2021.

The news release credited numerous program improvements during the past few years for driving the growth in enrolled acres. Among those are several efforts targeting South Dakota, including a first-ever agreement to enroll acres associated with the Cheyenne River, Rosebud and Oglala Sioux tribes.

Last year, the Ag Department entered into a special agreement with the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish & Parks focusing on the Big Sioux River Watershed to help farmers, ranchers and landowners in that area improve water quality, reduce soil erosion, enhance wildlife habitat and create public hunting and fishing access.

### **COMMENTARY**

#### **Try this in a small town**

**Instead of fear, anger or violence, how about public investment that helps hard-working people get by?**

**AMY ADAMS**

**OCTOBER 17, 2023 11:30 AM**

I'm not a fan of the controversial Jason Aldean song "Try That in a Small Town," which glorifies vigilante violence.

Unlike Aldean in his Nashville mansion, my three children and I actually live in a small town in impoverished Hopkins County, Kentucky. I sleep in our only bedroom with my toddler, while my daughter sleeps on the couch and her brother sleeps on an air mattress in the living room.

The guns Aldean sings about are no comfort when my 2-year-old needs child care and nutritious meals for her developing brain, when my teens want some privacy in our tiny apartment, or when I need to get to work without a car in a town with no public transit.

Towns like mine don't need more fear, anger, or violence. We need public investment that helps hard-working people get by.

I have two associate degrees and am just 12 credit hours shy of a bachelor's degree. I work six days a week. But with pay so low, rents so high, and elevated food costs, I can't make ends meet for my family

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in the ways they deserve.

We don't have sufficient child care where I live. I'm lucky that my 2-year-old's grandparents are able to watch her while I'm at work, but I have to work nights because that's when they're available. Without transportation, I walk home alone at night — three nights at 10 p.m. and three nights at 3 a.m.

Not long ago, we got a taste of what real investment could look like.

In 2021, even though the nation was still dealing with the pandemic and I'd lost my job as lead stylist at a salon, my family and I got some critical relief from the expanded federal Unemployment Insurance program, which held me over until I got another job.

We got a big boost from the expanded Child Tax Credit, which provided money each month to meet my family's needs and gave me more time to devote to parenting. We benefited from extra food assistance through SNAP and extra help from the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program.

Suddenly, I could buy my kids new school clothes and supplies. I could pay the rent and utilities on time. My kids had less stress. I had less stress. The difference is hard to put into words. I even joined SaverLife, a national nonprofit and advocacy organization that uses technology to help other struggling people.

Because of policies that invested in families, small businesses and essential workers, the nation's poverty rate and child poverty rate dramatically declined. We began to thrive — some of us for the first time in our lives.

But when all congressional Republicans, plus two conservative Senate Democrats, refused to extend these effective investments, all those gains were quickly reversed. After reaching a record low, our country's Supplemental Poverty Measure increased by a record amount last year.

And now, a handful of extremist lawmakers not only want to make sure those effective pandemic investments in families never return, but they also want to slash all programs that help ordinary people. These extreme demands nearly led to a government shutdown and may well lead to one in the future — an outcome that would be disastrous for hard-working small town families.

The expansion of the Child Tax Credit was the most effective anti-poverty program in a long time. By putting aside partisan differences, Congress and the White House could build better financial outcomes for millions of families.

Folks here are generous, but I can't rely on other hard-pressed families to keep a roof over our heads and food in our bellies. Instead, I need my tax dollars to invest in the well-being of my family.

What if families had the support they need to make a better life for themselves? Let's try that in a small town — and everywhere else.

*Amy Adams, a mother of three from Hopkins County, Kentucky, advocates for change as a member of SaverLife's advocacy panel.*

## Republicans push for border funding to be wrapped into Israel, Ukraine aid package

**Thune: GOP senators stand 'in solidarity with Israel'**

**BY: JACOB FISCHLER AND ASHLEY MURRAY - OCTOBER 17, 2023 6:38 PM**

WASHINGTON — U.S. Senate leaders called Tuesday for a bipartisan aid package for Israel's counteroffensive against Hamas that also includes assistance for Ukraine and Taiwan, with possible border funding sought by Republicans, as President Joe Biden prepared to leave Tuesday evening for a trip to Israel.

Meanwhile, an explosion killed hundreds Tuesday at al-Ahli Arab Hospital, also known as Baptist Hospital, in Gaza City, according to Palestinian officials who blamed the blast on Israeli forces.

Israel denied responsibility, saying enemy rockets "passed through the vicinity of the hospital when it was hit," the office of Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu posted on X.

In Washington, the Biden administration is preparing a supplemental budget request, which senators expect to see by the end of the week, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer told reporters Tuesday.

The package will include funding for Israel to address military, intelligence and humanitarian needs

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as the U.S. ally retaliates against Hamas for the militant group's attack on Oct. 7, Schumer, a New York Democrat, said.

The package will also include aid for Ukraine and Taiwan, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said. But the Kentucky Republican added Republicans would also seek to add funding for security measures at the U.S.-Mexico border.

"We'd like to get the supplemental package moved as quickly as possible because the needs are great in both Israel and Ukraine," Schumer said.

Schumer, who led a bipartisan delegation of senators to Israel over the weekend, said the package would have "the military help Israel needs, the diplomatic and intelligence help Israel needs, as well as humanitarian aid to minimize the loss of innocent human life of Palestinians and of Israelis."

Senate Republican Whip John Thune of South Dakota said at a Tuesday press conference the caucus was "heartbroken and disgusted" by Hamas' surprise attack that killed more than 1,300 Israelis, most of them civilians. Senate Republicans stood "in solidarity with Israel," and supported the country's right to exist and to "defend itself" from the Hamas attack, he said.

But Republicans also sought additional funding for border security, criticizing Biden for not prioritizing the issue.

"The administration will send up a supplemental that deals with Israel, Ukraine, Taiwan," McConnell said. "And Republicans are going to want something serious about the border. And so we'll take a look at the package when they send it up, make suggestions to improve it if that's needed, but clearly the world has changed dramatically in the last 10 days."

## **Biden heads to region**

Biden was scheduled to depart Tuesday evening for Israel.

Biden will "talk about how important it is for the United States and other partners to stand up for Israel and allow them to continue to defend themselves against Hamas terrorists," White House Security Council spokesman John Kirby said in a video on X.

"The United States support will stay strong and steady," he said.

The president will warn others in the region who may seek to widen or deepen the conflict to stay out, Kirby said.

U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin issued a "prepare to deploy order" to 2,000 Defense Department personnel Monday, Pentagon spokesperson Sabrina Singh said at a press briefing.

"This directive increases DOD's ability to respond quickly to the evolving security environment in the Middle East," Singh said.

Biden will also work with Israel to secure hostages, including U.S. citizens, being held by Hamas and will speak to the humanitarian situation in Gaza, Kirby said. The administration wants to see food, water and medicine flow into Gaza and that there is safe passage for civilians to get out, he said.

Biden was previously scheduled to meet with Jordanian King Abdullah, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas in Amman after departing Israel, but the White House announced late Tuesday that the president will postpone the visit after Abbas announced days of mourning.

"The President sent his deepest condolences for the innocent lives lost in the hospital explosion in Gaza, and wished a speedy recovery to the wounded," the White House said in a statement. "He looks forward to consulting in person with these leaders soon, and agreed to remain regularly and directly engaged with each of them over the coming days."

Secretary of State Antony Blinken has been in the region this week negotiating a safe passage for evacuees from Gaza to Egypt via Rafah and allowing humanitarian supplies to enter Gaza by the same crossing.

Former Senate Foreign Affairs Chairman Bob Menendez, a New Jersey Democrat, will not participate in a classified briefing on the Israel-Hamas war, Schumer said.

Menendez stepped down from his committee role after he was accused in a federal criminal indictment of being an unregistered agent of the Egyptian government, as well as bribery charges.

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Egypt is the only country other than Israel that shares a border with Gaza.

## Hospital explosion

The Pentagon could not confirm who caused the explosion at al-Ahli Arab Hospital or the number of casualties, Singh told reporters.

"I've seen the reports, I don't have any more details to provide at this time," Singh said during a televised press conference. "I don't know who is responsible. We don't have all the facts. And I'm sure as we learn more that will inform conversations, but right now I'm not going to go down a hypothetical road of who is responsible for something."

"What I can tell you again is that what the secretary (Austin) has been very clear on is that we expect Israel to uphold the law of war," Singh said.

Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Mohammed Shtayyeh called the shelling a "massacre" and "horrific crime."

Netanyahu's office posted on X: "According to intelligence information, from several sources we have, the Islamic Jihad terrorist organization is responsible for the failed shooting that hit the hospital."

The World Health Organization immediately condemned the "apparent attack" on the operational hospital, one of many under an evacuation order from the Israeli military.

"We call for the immediate protection of civilians and healthcare, and for the evacuation orders to be reversed," WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus posted on X.

The United Nations has expressed concern over Israel cutting supplies to the Gaza Strip.

"Crucial life-saving supplies – including fuel, food and water – must be allowed into Gaza. We need rapid and unimpeded humanitarian access now," UN Chief António Guterres said in a statement.

Israel has reopened access to water in the southern Gaza, Singh said Tuesday. Israel ordered an evacuation from the north part of the territory, affecting more than 1 million civilians, last week.

The administration will continue to remind Israel not to target civilians and follow other international laws of war, but would not put conditions on U.S. aid, Singh said.

'We need a confirmed ambassador'

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee is scheduled to hold a confirmation hearing Wednesday for Jack Lew to be the U.S. ambassador to Israel.

Maryland Democrat Ben Cardin, who chairs that committee, said Tuesday the Senate should confirm Lew promptly.

"We need a confirmed ambassador in Israel as soon as possible," he said. "We'll work to make sure that's a reality as soon as possible."

McConnell was noncommittal when asked if Republicans would support Lew, a former Treasury secretary under Democratic President Barack Obama.

"We'll take a look at it," McConnell said of Lew's nomination.

*Jacob covers federal policy as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Based in Oregon, he focuses on Western issues. His coverage areas include climate, energy development, public lands and infrastructure.*

*Ashley Murray covers the nation's capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include domestic policy and appropriations.*

## Ohio's Jim Jordan fails in bid for House speaker; Johnson hopes holdouts will flip

**BY: JENNIFER SHUTT, ARIANA FIGUEROA AND ASHLEY MURRAY - OCTOBER 17, 2023**

WASHINGTON — The U.S. House rejected Ohio's Jim Jordan as a candidate for speaker on Tuesday, though he vowed to secure the votes needed in the days ahead.

Jordan's decision to try to rally roughly 20 holdouts to his side leaves the House frozen, unable to take up legislation to fund the government ahead of a mid-November shutdown deadline, or to provide aid to Israel in its war against Hamas. The House has now gone two weeks without a speaker.



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The House will hold a second ballot on Wednesday, giving Jordan time to regroup, so he can try to flip those Republican holdouts.

"We're making progress. I feel good about it. We're going to keep going. I've had great conversations, great discussions with our colleagues," Jordan told reporters Tuesday night, saying he was willing to keep going until the House elected a speaker.

"Frankly, no one in our conference wants to see any type of coalition government with Democrats, so we're going to keep working and we're going to get to the votes," Jordan said.

House Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries, of New York, said Tuesday evening on the steps of the U.S. Capitol building that he expected talks about a consensus, bipartisan speaker candidate to accelerate.

"There have been ongoing, informal conversations that have been undertaken over the last few days," Jeffries said. "I think it's a possibility those can accelerate now that Jim Jordan clearly does not have the votes to be speaker."

Jeffries said Democrats are not using the phrase "power-sharing agreement because we recognize that Republicans temporarily hold the gavels. We respect that. We are not election deniers."

"But what is clear, based on the track record during this congressional session, is that our Republican colleagues cannot govern on their own because they have members of the House Republican Conference who don't want to do anything," Jeffries said.

Jordan, co-founder of the far-right Freedom Caucus and one of the lawmakers who bolstered former President Donald Trump's false claims about the 2020 election, fell short of the votes needed to hold the gavel amid concerns about his agenda and frustrations with his history inside and outside of Congress.

Republican Reps. Don Bacon of Nebraska, Ken Buck of Colorado, Lori Chavez-DeRemer of Oregon, Anthony D'Esposito of New York, Mario Díaz-Balart of Florida, Jake Ellzey of Texas, Andrew Garbarino of New York, Carlos Giménez of Florida, Tony Gonzales of Texas, Kay Granger of Texas, John James of Michigan, Mike Kelly of Pennsylvania, Jen Kiggans of Virginia, Nick LaLota of New York, Doug LaMalfa of California, Mike Lawler of New York, John Rutherford of Florida, Mike Simpson of Idaho, Victoria Spartz of Indiana and Steve Womack of Arkansas, as well as all Democrats voted against Jordan on the first ballot.

Florida Rep. Gus Bilirakis was the only Republican who didn't vote because he was attending a funeral.

House Republican Conference Chair Elise Stefanik, of New York, said in her nomination speech that Jordan is a "patriot" who would "go after corruption and deliver accountability."

"Jim is the voice of the American people who have felt voiceless for far too long," Stefanik said. "Whether as Judiciary chair, conservative leader, or representative for his constituents in west central Ohio, whether on the wrestling mat or in the committee room, Jim Jordan is strategic, scrappy, tough and principled."

House Democratic Caucus Chair Pete Aguilar, of California, nominated Jeffries for speaker, saying he was the clear candidate for anyone who wanted a bipartisan path ahead.

"The choice before us is simple, come together on a bipartisan path forward, or take us over the cliff," Aguilar said. "Abandon the extremism that is preventing us from getting things done, or triple down on division and dysfunction."

"A vote today to make the architect of a nationwide abortion ban, a vocal election denier and an insurrection insider to the speaker of this House would be a terrible message to the country and our allies," Aguilar said.

The tally had 212 votes for Jeffries, 200 votes for Jordan and 20 votes for other Republicans who weren't officially running.

## McCarthy ousted two weeks ago

The stalemate comes two weeks after eight House Republicans and Democrats voted to remove Kevin McCarthy as speaker about nine months into his tenure.

McCarthy had to hold 15 separate votes in January before he was able to become speaker and only after making several agreements behind closed doors with far-right members of the party.

After McCarthy announced he wouldn't try again to become speaker, Louisiana's Steve Scalise and Jordan announced their bids for the role.

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Scalise, currently the majority leader, won the first secret ballot nomination vote within the House Republican Conference. But he never scheduled a floor vote and withdrew from the race after just one day.

Jordan had said after losing the first nomination vote that he would back Scalise on the floor, but several of his followers refused to support their party's speaker nominee.

House Republicans huddled again Friday to take a second nomination vote for speaker, choosing between Jordan and Georgia's Austin Scott.

Jordan won that nomination vote, but another secret ballot taken afterward showed that more than 50 House Republicans said they wouldn't support him during a floor vote.

That gap dwindled over the weekend and throughout Monday as several Republicans who said they would never back Jordan during a floor vote announced public support.

Several holdouts remained heading into Tuesday's floor vote, leaving Jordan short of the roughly 217 votes he would need to become speaker.

Republican Rep. Dusty Johnson of South Dakota said he anticipated that Jordan might not have all the votes on the first ballot, but he said he remained hopeful that those GOP holdouts would flip.

"A lot of the people who are holding out are very reasonable people," Johnson said. "It's my assessment that when people stay at the table that a deal is possible."

But the holdouts maintained their opposition throughout Tuesday.

"I'm voting for a good, solid, conservative Republican. That's the only kind of person I'll vote for," Giménez said immediately following the vote. He voted for McCarthy.

Another GOP holdout, Rutherford of Florida, said that Republicans need to come to a consensus on their pick for speaker. Rutherford voted for Scalise.

"I think now we're gonna have to find a consensus candidate," he said, adding that he would support North Carolina Rep. Patrick McHenry.

Womack declined to comment on his vote, which was for Scalise, but said he "wants to find direction as to where the (Republican) conference is going right now."

Díaz-Balart said he was not budging on his vote against Jordan, and still gave his support for Scalise, who he voted for.

"I am where I am," Díaz-Balart said after the vote.

He also released a letter shortly after the first vote, requesting that the House "return immediately and begin a second vote on electing a new Speaker." Several other Republicans such as Womack and Granger, both appropriators, agreed with Díaz-Balart.

Chavez-DeRemer, who voted for McCarthy on Tuesday, said she did so because he was the closest Republican to secure the necessary 217 votes, but that she would "continue to reassess where things stand as this process plays out."

Chavez-DeRemer said she feared the chaos of the last few weeks would only continue under a Jordan speakership. With the Republican conference still bitterly divided, she said the chamber should empower McHenry.

"Until we can find clear consensus among the Republican Conference, it's time to give expanded authority to Speaker Pro Tempore McHenry so the House can resume governing," she wrote on X, formerly Twitter.

Pennsylvania Rep. Scott Perry, chair of the House Freedom Caucus, said he's confident Jordan will get enough votes later.

"Jim is a championed wrestler, who's wrestled a lot of rounds," Perry said. "I think he can go the distance."

## Attempt to expand McHenry powers

Pennsylvania's Kelly introduced a resolution Monday night to elect McHenry as speaker pro tempore for up to 30 days. Approving that resolution would expand McHenry's powers beyond what they are as the speaker pro tempore by designation, Kelly said.

Under the resolution, McHenry would stay in the role until Nov. 17 — the same day government funding is set to expire — or until a new speaker is elected, whichever is first.

McHenry has been serving as the speaker pro tempore by McCarthy's designation under a process put in place to ensure continuity of government following the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks.

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When asked by reporters if he would switch his vote from Scalise to Jordan, Kelly said he would not. "No, I can't because we had already elected somebody to be our speaker," Kelly said, referring to the conference's nomination of Scalise.

Spartz of Indiana told reporters on her way into the chamber that she would vote present if the vote count was not in Jordan's favor, but she ended up voting for Kentucky Rep. Thomas Massie instead.

On Monday night Spartz said she believed "intimidation techniques" were used to "push people on the floor before we find consensus."

LaMalfa, who voted for McCarthy in the first round, said the process to reach a speaker nominee was "terrible" but that he'll pivot to Jordan on the second ballot.

"I'm voting for Jim Jordan because he's a good guy, and he's done good work on committee, and we need to move forward with this place today and get our work done."

*Jacob Fischler contributed to this report.*

*Jennifer covers the nation's capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include congressional policy, politics and legal challenges with a focus on health care, unemployment, housing and aid to families.*

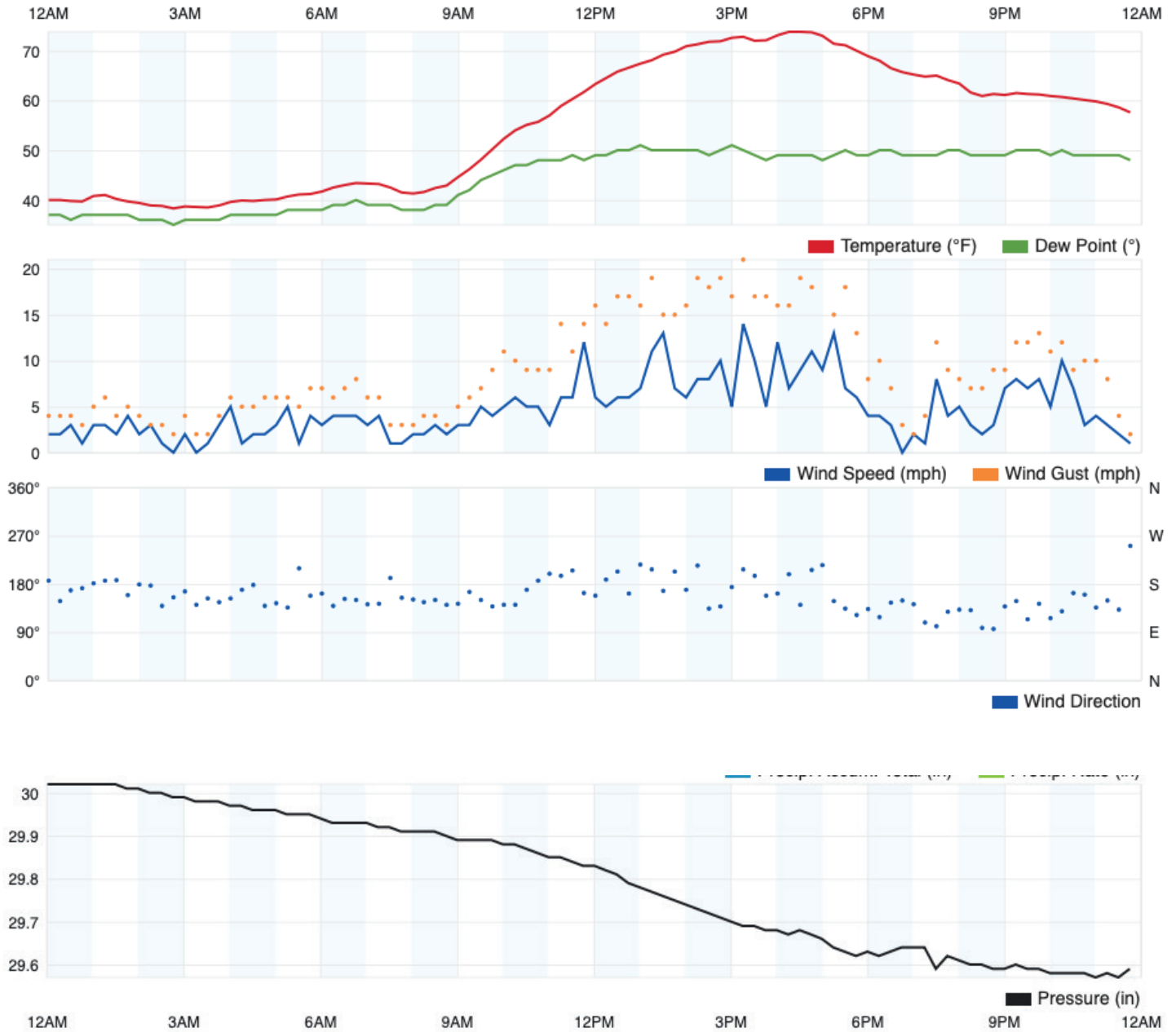
*Ariana covers the nation's capital for States Newsroom. Her areas of coverage include politics and policy, lobbying, elections and campaign finance.*

*Ashley Murray covers the nation's capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include domestic policy and appropriations.*

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs





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Wed Oct 18	Thu Oct 19	Fri Oct 20	Sat Oct 21	Sun Oct 22	Mon Oct 23	Tue Oct 24
57°F	65°F	69°F	62°F	60°F	61°F	58°F
42°F	41°F	40°F	40°F	43°F	47°F	37°F
WNW	W	SW	NNW	ESE	SE	SSE
23 MPH	13 MPH	21 MPH	12 MPH	13 MPH	16 MPH	18 MPH
50%						20%



## Blustery & Cooler Today

October 18, 2023

3:05 AM

With scattered rain showers

### Probability of Precipitation Forecast

	10/18 Wed						10/19 Thu
	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am
Aberdeen	20	30	35	25	5	5	0
Britton	10	40	50	35	25	15	5
Brookings	15	15	50	55	45	25	20
Chamberlain	15	25	20	20	10	5	5
Clark	5	35	50	50	25	10	5
Eagle Butte	5	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ellendale	20	25	35	20	5	5	0
Eureka	50	50	20	0	0	0	0
Gettysburg	45	45	15	5	0	0	0
Huron	15	15	40	40	30	10	5
Kennebec	5	10	10	5	0	0	0
McIntosh	20	5	0	0	0	0	0
Milbank	30	30	45	50	45	15	10
Miller	20	50	40	15	0	5	0
Mobridge	45	25	5	5	0	0	0
Murdo	5	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pierre	10	10	5	5	0	0	0
Redfield	20	40	30	25	10	5	0
Sisseton	15	45	50	40	25	20	10
Watertown	10	35	50	50	40	15	10
Webster	5	40	50	45	25	15	5
Wheaton	45	40	40	45	30	15	5

### Today

Highs 55-62°



### Thursday

Highs 60s to near 70°

### Friday

Highs 65-75°



### Saturday

Highs in the 60s



### Sunday

Highs 55-65°



### Maximum Wind Gust Forecast

	10/18 Wed						10/19 Thu						
	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am	3am	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm
Aberdeen	26	33	36	38	36	30	21	15	10	15	17	23	16
Britton	18	25	29	33	31	29	25	17	9	15	20	22	15
Brookings	24	26	28	30	29	28	26	22	16	18	21	21	16
Chamberlain	38	40	40	40	36	25	18	13	9	15	23	24	16
Clark	28	30	30	35	35	31	28	23	15	14	18	22	17
Eagle Butte	44	47	44	41	36	21	14	12	15	26	32	32	24
Ellendale	26	32	38	40	36	29	21	15	10	15	20	23	15
Eureka	33	38	41	40	35	24	16	12	9	16	24	28	21
Gettysburg	37	41	44	44	37	26	18	13	12	18	26	30	22
Huron	30	31	33	36	35	29	22	17	13	13	17	21	14
Kennebec	38	43	44	43	38	29	22	14	10	16	28	31	21
McIntosh	48	49	41	38	32	17	12	10	14	26	32	32	23
Milbank	22	24	25	29	31	29	26	24	18	15	18	21	15
Miller	35	38	40	40	37	26	21	17	12	16	22	26	18
Mobridge	38	40	40	37	32	22	13	9	10	17	23	25	20
Murdo	45	47	44	41	37	26	18	12	13	23	31	32	22
Pierre	33	40	40	39	35	25	16	8	8	15	25	28	20
Redfield	29	35	37	38	37	30	23	16	12	13	17	22	16
Sisseton	25	25	26	32	31	30	26	23	17	16	20	23	15
Watertown	26	28	29	32	33	30	25	23	18	17	20	22	17
Webster	25	28	31	36	35	31	26	23	16	16	21	24	18
Wheaton	22	21	22	25	26	24	22	22	17	14	16	17	14



National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

Blustery and Cooler with few Showers

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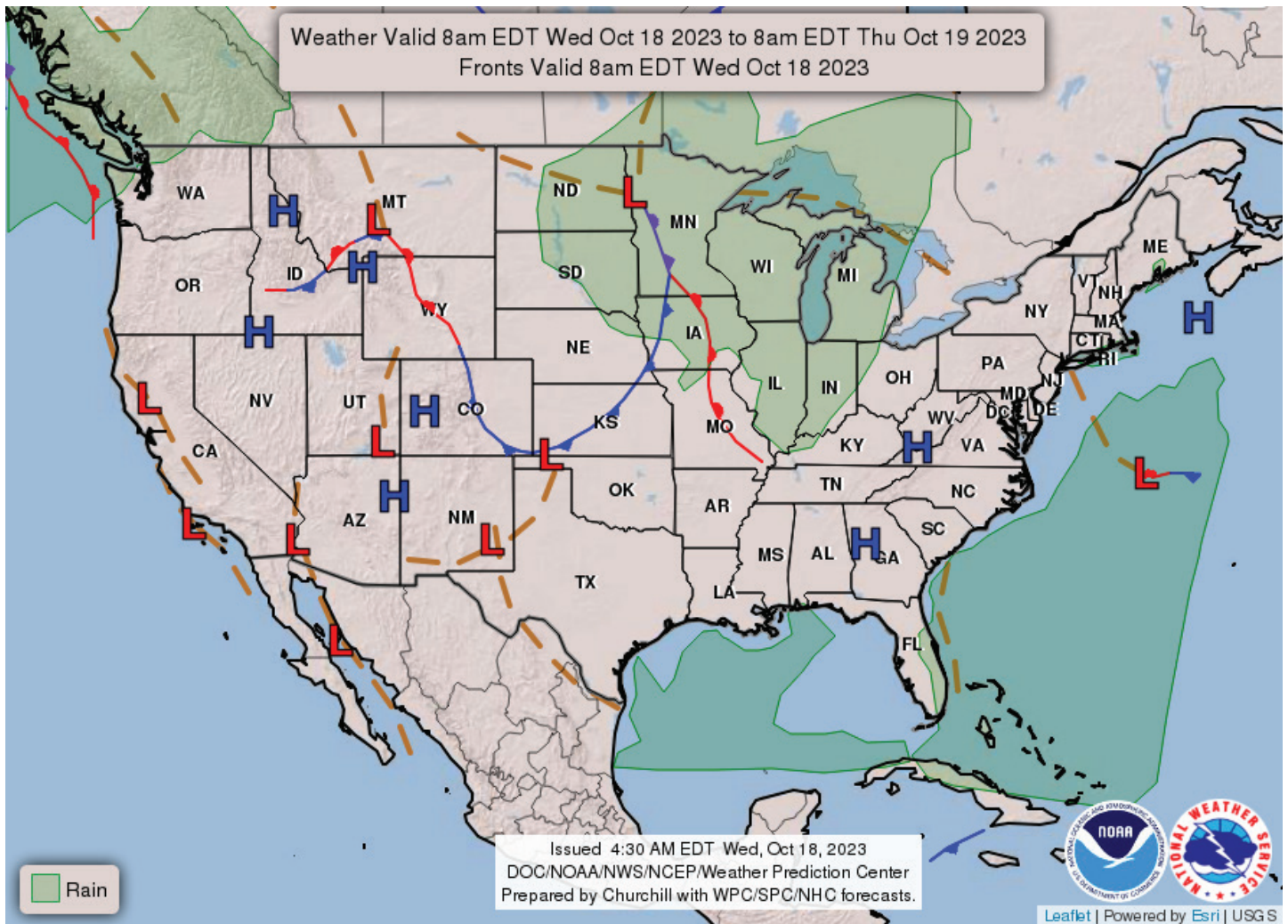
## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 74 °F at 4:16 PM**  
**Low Temp: 38 °F at 2:44 AM**  
**Wind: 21 mph at 3:09 PM**  
**Precip: : 0.00**

Day length: 10 hours, 52 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 90 in 1910  
Record Low: 12 in 1930  
Average High: 58  
Average Low: 32  
Average Precip in Oct.: 1.37  
Precip to date in Oct.: 0.80  
Average Precip to date: 19.70  
Precip Year to Date: 22.57  
Sunset Tonight: 6:43:54 PM  
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:52:31 AM





## Today in Weather History

October 18, 2012: An area of low pressure rapidly intensified once it moved east of the northern plains. This strengthening resulted in very strong northwest winds across the region. Some of the higher reported wind gusts include 77 mph at the Fort Pierre and Grand River RAWs sites, 74 mph at the Pierre airport, and 70 mph at Murdo, Presho, and Hayes public observation sites.

1906 - A hurricane struck South Florida drowning 124 persons stranded in the Florida Keys. (David Ludlum)

1910 - Northeasterly winds as high as 70 mph (from a hurricane moving northward up the Florida peninsula) carried water out of Tampa Bay and the Hillsboro River. The water level lowered to nine feet below mean low water. Forty ships were grounded. (The Weather Channel)

1916: A tropical depression organized to a tropical storm on October 11 in the western Caribbean. It moved westward, reaching hurricane strength on the 13th before hitting the Yucatán Peninsula on the 15th as a 110 mph hurricane. It weakened over land, and it emerged over the southern Gulf of Mexico as a tropical storm. It quickly re-strengthened to a Category 3 hurricane, hitting Pensacola on October 18. The maximum wind velocity at Mobile was 115 mph from the east at 8:25 am. Pensacola had winds of 120 mph at 10:13 am when the wind instrument tower was blown down.

1930 - A big early season lake effect snowburst on the lee shores of Lake Erie and Lake Ontario produced 47 inches at Gouverneur NY and 48 inches just south of Buffalo. (David Ludlum)

1987 - Thunderstorms in northeastern Texas produced golf ball size hail at Atlanta, along with wind gusts to 86 mph, and four inches of rain. Damage from the storm was estimated at more than a million dollars. Sunny and mild weather continued across much of the rest of the nation. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Eight cities in the southwestern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date, including Red Bluff CA with a reading of 96 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Unseasonably cold air began to invade the central and eastern U.S. Light snow fell across northern Maine, and snow was also reported in the Great Lakes Region, including the Chicago area. Bismarck ND was the cold spot in the nation with a low of 9 degrees above zero. Five cities in Florida reported record high readings for the date, as temperatures warmed above 80 degrees. Miami FL reported a record high of 90 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

2005 - With the formation of Hurricane Wilma, the 2005 Atlantic hurricane season tied the record for the most named storms for any season (21 storms in 1933), and also tied the record for the most hurricanes in a single season (12 in 1969). Wilma peaked at category-5 intensity on the 19th, with a minimum central pressure falling to 882 millibars (26.05 inches of mercury), the lowest pressure ever recorded in the Atlantic Basin. Wilma also became the most rapidly-intensifying storm on record, with a maximum-sustained surface wind speed increase of 105 mph in a 24-hour period.

2007: A destructive fall tornado hit Nappanee, Indiana causing extensive damage along its 20-mile path across northeast Marshall, Northwest Kosciusko and southwest Elkhart Counties. High-end EF3 intensity winds near 165 mph were estimated based on the most severe damage over southeast Nappanee. Over 100 structures sustained significant damage or were destroyed in town alone. Despite the widespread damage and time of day, only minor injuries were reported.



Daily Devotionals

## Seeds of Hope

### WHAT ARE YOU DOING WITH MY WORLD?

It was Jim's sixth birthday, and his father wanted him to begin to understand continents and nations. So, he bought him a lighted globe. He was fascinated with the way it glowed in the dark and gently lit his room. And, he also enjoyed the time his Dad spent in his room telling him stories about the different countries of the world and bodies of water.

One evening his Dad silently slipped into his room thinking that Jim was asleep. He wanted to "borrow" the globe so he could locate the countries that were mentioned during the evening news hour.

As he was leaving, Jim who was not asleep, asked, "Dad, what are you doing with my world?"

What a great question. Surely, God would have each of us answer a similar question: "What are you doing in My world on My behalf?" Or, perhaps, "What are you doing for Me in My world?"

Jesus said that "God loved the world so much that He sent Me into the world to save the people of the world." We know that Jesus fulfilled God's plan for His life; He gave His life on the cross for our salvation. We also know that He is now in heaven with His Father. And, we also know that the work that Jesus began is to be carried on by us - His disciples.

As His disciples, it is important, no it is critical, that we ask ourselves constantly, "What are we doing in God's world today to save the lost for whom my Son, your Savior, died?"

Prayer: Lord, give us an urgency to do Your work in Your world to save the lost. Do not let us know peace or rest until we bring Your message to someone each day. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. John 3:16



We all need the encouragement, comfort, and peace that comes through God's grace. Our daily devotionals, known as Seeds of Hope, have been a means through which thousands of people have experienced this grace. Each devotional comes from God's Word and we pray this good "seed" finds good soil in your heart. Our aim is that the Seeds of Hope will be a great source of daily encouragement to you and that God will use them to draw you near to Him

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## 2023 Community Events

- 01/29/2023 Groton Robotics Pancake Feed, 10am-1pm, Community Center
- 01/29/2023 85th Carnival of Silver Skates 2pm & 6:30pm (Last Sunday of January)
- 01/31/2023-02/03/2023 Lion's Club Prom & Formal Dress Consignment Drop Off 6-9pm, Community Center
- 02/04/2023-02/05/2023 Lion's Club Prom & Formal Dress Consignment Sale 1-5pm, Community Center
- 02/25/2023 Littles and Me, Art Making 10-11:30am, Wage Memorial Library
- 03/25/2023 Spring Vendor Fair, 10am-3pm, Community Center
- 04/01/2023 Dueling Duo Baseball/Softball Fundraiser at the Legion Post #39 6-11:30pm
- 04/06/2023 Groton Career Development Event
- 04/08/2023 Lion's Club Easter Egg Hunt 10am Sharp at the City Park (Saturday a week before Easter)
- 04/22/2023 Firemen's Spring Social at the Fire Station 7pm-12:30am (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)
- 04/23/2023 Princess Prom 4:30-8pm (Sunday after GHS Prom)
- 05/06/2023 Lion's Club Spring Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm (1st Saturday in May)
- 05/29/2023 Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Services (Memorial Day)
- 06/16/2023 SDSU Alumni and Friends Golf Tournament
- 06/17/2023 Groton Triathlon
- 07/04/2023 Couples Firecracker Golf Tournament
- 07/09/2023 Lion's Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 9am-4pm (Sunday Mid-July)
- 07/26/2023 GGA Burger Fundraiser Lunch at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 08/04/2023 Wine on Nine 6pm
- 08/10/2023 Family Fun Fest, 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.
- 08/11/2023 GHS Basketball Golf Tournament
- 09/08/2023 Family Fun Fest 3:30-5:30pm
- 09/09/2023 Lion's Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm
- 09/09-10/2023 Groton Airport Fly-In/Drive-In, Groton Municipal Airport
- 09/10/2023 Couples Sunflower Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 10am
- 09/10/2023 Emmanuel Lutheran Church Sunday School Rally 9:00am
- 09/10/2023 7th Annual Doggie Day at the Swimming Pool 4-6pm
- 09/15/2023 Homecoming Parade
- 10/13/2023 Lake Region Marching Band Festival 10am
- 10/14/2023 Pumpkin Fest at the City Park 10am-3pm
- 10/31/2023 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm
- 10/31/2023 United Methodist Church Trunk or Treat 5:30-7pm
- 11/23/2023 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm
- 12/02/2023 Tour of Homes, Live & Silent Auctions at Olive Grove Golf Course 4pm-close
- 12/09/2023 Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services 9-11am

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## The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

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## WINNING NUMBERS

### MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS: 10.17.23

5 6 29 32 61 20

MegaPlier: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$91,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 16 Hrs 2 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:  
10.16.23

11 30 37 39 47 7

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$2,800,000**

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 15 Mins 2 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 10.17.23

2 14 15 21 35 6

TOP PRIZE:

**\$7,000/week**

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 30 Mins 2 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:  
10.14.23

3 7 14 23 26

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$24,000**

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 30 Mins 2 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:  
10.16.23

1 2 15 17 34 1

TOP PRIZE:

**\$10,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 59 Mins 2 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:  
10.16.23

2 27 31 44 64 18

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$49,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 59 Mins 2 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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News from the  Associated Press

## Tuesday's Scores

The Associated Press

PREP VOLLEYBALL=

Aberdeen Central def. Mitchell, 25-20, 25-22, 25-17  
Aberdeen Christian def. Ipswich, 25-20, 25-22, 25-17  
Aberdeen Roncalli def. Milbank, 25-23, 23-25, 25-18, 25-20  
Alcester-Hudson def. Freeman Academy-Marion, 25-15, 25-17, 25-22  
Avon def. Corsica/Stickney, 25-22, 25-18, 25-11  
Baltic def. Centerville, 25-16, 25-17, 25-15  
Belle Fourche def. St. Thomas More, 25-21, 25-14, 25-15  
Burke def. Gayville-Volin High School, 25-19, 25-19, 19-25, 25-15  
Canistota def. Sioux Falls Lutheran, 25-21, 25-19, 24-26, 25-13  
Castlewood def. DeSmet, 25-15, 25-12, 25-14  
Chester def. Sioux Valley, 25-12, 25-17, 25-12  
Clark/Willow Lake def. Tiospa Zina Tribal, 25-13, 25-15, 25-15  
Colman-Egan def. Deubrook, 25-22, 25-17, 25-12  
Crow Creek Tribal School def. Crazy Horse, 25-11, 25-12, 25-8  
Dell Rapids def. Madison, 25-23, 25-21, 23-25, 25-21  
Douglas def. Lead-Deadwood, 25-18, 25-11, 25-15  
Edgemont def. Lakota Tech, 25-12, 25-12, 25-15  
Elk Point-Jefferson def. Tri-Valley, 23-25, 25-21, 25-19, 26-24  
Elkton-Lake Benton def. Dell Rapids St. Mary, 25-16, 25-13, 25-7  
Estelline/Hendricks def. Iroquois/ Lake Preston Co-op, 25-13, 25-13, 25-23  
Florence/Henry def. Deuel, 27-25, 25-16, 25-10  
Freeman def. Hanson, 25-20, 25-13, 25-23  
Garretson def. West Central, 25-22, 25-19, 25-21  
Great Plains Lutheran def. Britton-Hecla, 25-22, 25-10, 25-10  
Groton Area def. Northwestern, 29-27, 21-25, 25-20, 28-26  
Herreid/Selby Area def. Sully Buttes, 25-17, 25-20, 25-18  
Highmore-Harrold def. Lyman, 25-13, 25-23, 25-21  
Hitchcock-Tulare def. Sanborn Central/Woonsocket, 25-12, 25-21, 25-12  
James Valley Christian def. Wessington Springs, 19-25, 25-11, 25-11, 25-21  
Jones County def. Colome, 25-8, 25-12, 25-18  
Kadoka Area def. New Underwood, 25-12, 25-15, 25-12  
Lemmon High School def. Bowman County, N.D., 16-25, 26-24, 25-18, 25-16  
Lennox def. McCook Central/Montrose, 25-16, 25-16, 25-13  
Leola-Frederick High School def. Waverly-South Shore, 25-18, 25-15, 25-9  
Linton/HMB, N.D. def. Mobridge-Pollock, 17-25, 25-19, 25-12, 16-25, 15-9  
Mt. Vernon/Plankinton def. Gregory, 25-14, 25-18, 21-25, 26-24  
North Central Co-Op def. Wakpala, 25-16, 25-12, 25-18  
Parkston def. Bon Homme, 24-26, 17-25, 25-21, 25-22, 15-11  
Pierre T F Riggs High School def. Huron, 19-25, 25-18, 25-12, 14-25, 15-6  
Platte-Geddes def. Kimball/White Lake, 25-17, 21-25, 25-11, 25-10  
Rapid City Christian def. Sturgis Brown, 25-19, 25-8, 25-21  
Sioux Falls Jefferson def. Watertown, 25-14, 25-16, 25-15  
Sioux Falls O'Gorman def. Sioux Falls Lincoln, 25-17, 25-22, 25-23

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Sioux Falls Roosevelt def. Brookings, 25-16, 25-6, 25-15  
Spearfish def. Hot Springs, 28-26, 25-18, 25-10  
Vermillion def. Beresford, 25-9, 25-20, 25-15  
Wagner def. Winner, 25-13, 25-16, 25-12  
Webster def. Langford, 25-17, 25-13, 28-26  
White River def. Lower Brule, 25-13, 25-6, 25-14  
Wolsey-Wessington def. Sunshine Bible Academy, 25-8, 25-13, 25-15  
Crawford Triangular=  
Cody-Kilgore, Neb. def. Oelrichs, 0-0, undefined-undefined, undefined-undefined, undefined-undefined,  
undefined-undefined  
Crawford, Neb. def. Oelrichs, 0-0  
Kadoka Triangular=  
Kadoka Area def. Stanley County, 25-14, 26-24, 25-14  
Stanley County def. New Underwood, 25-15, 25-18, 25-23

Some high school volleyball scores provided by Scorestream.com, <https://scorestream.com/>

General Mills and Walmart Join Forces to Advance Regenerative Agriculture Across 600,000 Acres by 2030  
MINNEAPOLIS & BENTONVILLE, Ark.--(BUSINESS WIRE)--Oct 17, 2023--

General Mills, Walmart and Sam's Club announced a collaboration today to help accelerate the adoption of regenerative agriculture on 600,000 acres in the U.S. by 2030. This represents the approximate number of acres General Mills engages to source key ingredients for its products sold through Walmart and Sam's Club. Initial projects will be supported through grants administered by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) and seek to advance regenerative agriculture outcomes across a variety of crops, including wheat, in the Northern and Southern Great Plains.

This press release features multimedia. View the full release here: <https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20231017109812/en/>

"Through this partnership, we will work hand-in-hand with Walmart and Sam's Club to help regenerate the acres of land in the key regions where we source ingredients for our shared business," said Jon Nudi, Group President, North America Retail at General Mills. "We are excited by the opportunity to bring our products, including Pillsbury refrigerated dough and Blue Buffalo pet food and treats, to Walmart shelves more sustainably, with the help of our merchants and farmer partners."

General Mills, Walmart and Sam's Club share a belief that regenerative agriculture can help address climate change and create positive outcomes for both people and our planet. Recognizing their shared footprint within the industry, this collaboration exemplifies both companies' intention to build on organizational commitments and leverage collaboration to help spur industry-wide change. Efforts will target seven U.S. states in the Northern and Southern Great Plains including North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, Colorado and Minnesota, home of General Mills' global headquarters.

Through the program, NFWF will provide financial assistance to local grantee organizations, building out the education and coaching resources needed to help accelerate regenerative agriculture. The objective is twofold: support the transition to regenerative agriculture production in the U.S. through systems change and elevate the potential for more resilient yields for farmers through efforts that will help improve soil health, watersheds, biodiversity, climate change and farmer economic resilience.

"We're committing to making the everyday choice the more sustainable choice for consumers," said John Laney, Executive Vice President, Food at Walmart U.S. "This collaboration is an example of how we are working across our value chain on intentional interventions to help advance regenerative agriculture and ensure surety of supply for these essential food products for the long term."

This joint effort between General Mills, Walmart and Sam's Club also marks meaningful and continued progress toward both company's individual sustainability goals, provides a roadmap for future collaboration across organizations and industries, and ensures both companies can continue to offer the quality products



their customers love. It also puts General Mills on pace to exceed its goal of advancing the adoption of regenerative agriculture on one million acres by 2030 and contributes to Walmart's goal, in collaboration with the Walmart Foundation, to protect, more sustainably manage or restore at least 50 million acres of land by 2030.

## **Biden pledges solidarity with Israelis and suggests 'other team' to blame for Gaza hospital blast**

By AAMER MADHANI and COLLEEN LONG Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — President Joe Biden vowed to show the world that the U.S. stands in solidarity with Israelis during his visit there Wednesday, and offered an assessment that the deadly explosion at a Gaza Strip hospital apparently was not carried out by the Israeli military.

"Based on what I've seen, it appears as though it was done by the other team, not you," Biden told Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu during a meeting. But Biden said there were "a lot of people out there" who weren't sure what caused the blast.

Biden didn't offer details on why he believed the blast was not caused by the Israelis. The Hamas-run Gaza Health Ministry said an Israeli airstrike caused the destruction and hundreds of deaths. The Israeli military denied involvement and blamed a misfired rocket from the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, another militant group. However, that organization also rejected responsibility.

Biden had been scheduled to visit Jordan to meet with Arab leaders after the stop in Israel, but the summit was called off after the hospital explosion. And his remarks spoke both of the horrors the Israelis had endured, but also the growing humanitarian crisis for Palestinian civilians in Gaza.

He told Netanyahu he was "deeply saddened and outraged" by the hospital explosion. He stressed that "Hamas does not represent all the Palestinian people, and it has brought them only suffering."

Biden spoke of the need to find ways of "encouraging life-saving capacity to help the Palestinians who are innocent, caught in the middle of this."

But he also said Hamas had "slaughtered" Israelis in the Oct. 7 attack that killed 1,400 people. Biden described at length the horror of the killing of innocent Israelis, including children.

"Americans are grieving, they really are," Biden said. "Americans are worried."

Netanyahu thanked Biden for coming to Israel, telling him the visit was "deeply, deeply moving."

"I know I speak for all the people of Israel when I say thank you Mr. President, thank you for standing with Israel today, tomorrow and always."

Netanyahu said Biden had rightly drawn a clear line between the "forces of civilization and the forces of barbarism," saying Israel was united in its resolve to defeat Hamas.

"The civilized world must unite to defeat Hamas," he said.

Biden also planned to meet Israeli first responders and the families of victims and hostages. Netanyahu met Biden at Ben Gurion Airport and the two embraced. It was almost exactly a month ago that they sat together at the United Nations General Assembly, where Netanyahu marveled that a "historic peace between Israel and Saudi Arabia" seemed within reach.

The possibility of improved relations between Israel and its Arab neighbors appears to be dimming; Israel has been preparing for a potential ground invasion of Gaza in response to Hamas' attacks.

Roughly 2,800 Palestinians have been reported killed by Israeli strikes in Gaza. Another 1,200 people are believed to be buried under the rubble, alive or dead, health authorities said.

Those numbers predate the explosion at the Al-Ahli hospital on Tuesday. No clear cause has been established for the blast.

Protests swept through the region after the blast at the hospital, which had been treating wounded Palestinians and sheltering many more who were seeking a refuge from the fighting.

Hundreds of Palestinians flooded the streets of major West Bank cities including Ramallah. More people joined protests that erupted in Beirut, Lebanon and Amman, Jordan, where an angry crowd gathered outside the Israeli Embassy.

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Outrage scuttled Biden's plans to visit Jordan, where King Abdullah II was to host meetings with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi. But Abbas withdrew in protest, and the summit was subsequently canceled outright.

Ayman Safadi, Jordan's foreign minister, told a state-run television network that the war is "pushing the region to the brink."

Jordan declared three days of mourning after the hospital explosion and Safadi said the summit was canceled after speaking with all leaders. He said they had wanted the meeting to produce an end to the war, which seems unlikely now, and to give Palestinians the respect they deserve. Kirby said Biden understood the move was part of a "mutual" decision to call off the Jordan portion of his trip. He said Biden would speak to the Arab leaders by phone as he returned to Washington.

Riyad Mansour, the Palestinian U.N. ambassador, said Tuesday that Biden was "capable of telling Israel, Enough is enough."

"You have to stop this carnage against the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip. Let this stop. Let humanitarian assistance take place," he said. "Do not displace two million Palestinians and push them in the direction of Jordan and then let's begin a political horizon."

There are also fears that a new front could erupt along Israel's northern border with Lebanon, where Hezbollah operates. The Iran-backed organization has been skirmishing with Israeli forces.

Always a believer in the power of personal diplomacy, Biden's trip will test the limits of U.S. influence in the Middle East at a volatile time. It's his second trip to a conflict zone this year, after visiting Ukraine in February to show solidarity with the country as it battles a Russian invasion.

The visit to Israel coincides with rising humanitarian concerns in Gaza, where Israel has cut off the flow of food, fuel and water. Mediators have been struggling to break a deadlock over providing supplies to desperate civilians, aid groups and hospitals.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, bouncing back and forth between Arab and Israeli leadership ahead of Biden's visit, spent seven and a half hours meeting Monday in Tel Aviv in an effort to broker some kind of aid agreement and emerged with a green light to develop a plan on how aid can enter Gaza and be distributed to civilians.

Although only a modest accomplishment on the surface, U.S. officials stressed that Blinken's talks led to a significant change in Israel's position going in — that Gaza would remain cut off from fuel, electricity, water and other essential supplies.

U.S. officials said it has become clear that already limited Arab tolerance of Israel's military operations would evaporate entirely if conditions in Gaza worsened.

Their analysis projected that outright condemnation of Israel by Arab leaders would not only be a boon to Hamas but would likely encourage Iran to step up its anti-Israel activity, adding to fears that a regional conflagration might erupt, according to four officials who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity to discuss internal administration thinking.

## **Ex-Treasury Secretary Lew, Biden's pick for ambassador to Israel, will face senators at a hearing**

By MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Senate is moving quickly to confirm Jacob Lew as ambassador to Israel, holding a hearing on his nomination Wednesday as President Joe Biden visits the region to reinforce U.S. support for Israel and try to ease tensions in its new war with Hamas.

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing comes as the White House has told lawmakers that it is considering a request of between \$90 billion and \$100 billion for the wars in Israel and Ukraine and for Taiwan as it faces threats from China, according to four people familiar with the conversations. The request to Congress would cover a year, according to another person familiar with the Biden administration's expected request.

Lew, a Treasury Secretary under President Barack Obama, was nominated by Biden last month after

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Ambassador Tom Nides left the post in July. Democrats say Lew's wealth of government experience — he also served as a White House chief of staff and director of the Office of Management and Budget under Obama — makes him the right person to fill the post at an important moment in the two countries' relationship.

Committee Chairman Ben Cardin, D-Md., said Tuesday that Lew, who goes by Jack, is "an outstanding, qualified person" and that it is urgent to have a confirmed ambassador to help Israel as it navigates the war, works to release hostages held by Hamas and deals with increasing concerns about tensions on the northern border with Hezbollah. Cardin said it is also important to "to keep normalization talks alive" that could improve diplomatic relations between Israel and Arab countries in the region.

"It is as critical as ever" to fill the post quickly, Cardin said.

The White House could make a formal request for the foreign war aid as soon as this week. Though there is near-unanimous support for Israel in Congress, a \$100 billion package, if that is what the Democratic administration requests, could face major obstacles as some Republicans have balked at linking the money for Israel with the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. The House has been in chaos since Republicans unexpectedly ousted their speaker, Kevin McCarthy, two weeks ago.

Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell has supported linking aid for the two countries and Taiwan but has said it would have to come with additional measures to help control immigration at the U.S. border.

At his weekly news conference on Tuesday, McConnell would not say if he supported Lew's confirmation. Some Republicans have criticized Lew for his role in the Obama White House as it negotiated the Iran nuclear agreement in 2015, among other foreign policy moves under Obama, and that opposition could slow his nomination.

The deal with Iran was sealed in 2015 but later scuttled by President Donald Trump. Biden has sought to resurrect the pact, which would provide Tehran with billions of dollars in sanctions relief in exchange for the country agreeing to roll back its nuclear program.

Republican Sen. Tom Cotton of Arkansas has said he views Lew as too sympathetic to Iran — Hamas' chief sponsor — and will fight his nomination.

"Democrats are saying we need to confirm Jack Lew quickly to show our support for Israel, but I would say the exact opposite," Cotton said on "Fox News Sunday" last weekend. "We need to defeat Jack Lew's nomination to show we have a new approach to Iran."

Lew has been visiting senators' offices ahead of his hearing to shore up support. Democratic Sen. Chris Murphy of Connecticut, a member of the Foreign Relations panel, said he met with Lew on Tuesday and discussed with him the humanitarian crisis developing in Gaza amid Israeli strikes.

"Our ability to support Israel at this pivotal moment is significantly hamstrung by the fact that we don't have a U.S. ambassador on the ground," Murphy said.

## **Gaza carnage spreads anger across Mideast, alarming US allies and threatening to widen conflict**

By SAMY MAGDY and JOSEPH KRAUSS Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — Within hours after a blast was said to have killed hundreds at a Gaza hospital, protesters hurled stones at Palestinian security forces in the occupied West Bank and at riot police in neighboring Jordan, venting fury at their leaders for failing to stop the carnage.

President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi of Egypt, King Abdullah II of Jordan and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas — friends of the U.S. who normally relish the chance to meet with American presidents — called off a planned Wednesday summit with Joe Biden, who will now only visit Israel.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken spent much of the past week meeting with Arab leaders to try to keep tensions in check, but those efforts are now in doubt following the hospital blast. The raw nerve of decades of Palestinian suffering, left exposed by U.S.-brokered normalization agreements between Israel and Arab states, is throbbing once again, threatening broader unrest.



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"This war, which has entered a dangerous phase, will plunge the region into an unspeakable disaster," warned Abdullah, who is among the closest Western allies in the Mideast.

Gaza's Hamas-run Health Ministry said an Israeli airstrike caused the hospital blast, while Israel blamed it on a rocket fired by the militant Islamic Jihad group that fell short. Biden echoed the Israeli view after arriving in Tel Aviv, saying the blast appeared to have been caused "by the other team, not you," but that there were "a lot of people out there" who weren't sure.

There was no doubt among the Arab protesters who gathered in several countries late Tuesday to condemn what they saw as an Israeli atrocity.

In the Israeli-occupied West Bank, which has been under lockdown since a bloody Oct. 7 rampage by Hamas militants ignited the war, protesters clashed with Palestinian security forces and called for the overthrow of Abbas.

Israel and the West have long viewed Abbas as a partner in reducing tensions, but his Palestinian Authority is widely seen by Palestinians as a corrupt and autocratic accomplice to Israel's military occupation of the West Bank.

Jordan, long considered a bastion of stability in the region, has seen mass protests in recent days. Late Tuesday, pro-Palestinian protesters tried to storm the Israeli Embassy.

"They are all normalizing Arab rulers, none of them are free, the free ones are all dead!" one protester shouted. "Arab countries are unable to do anything!"

Egypt was the first Arab country to make peace with Israel, in the late 1970s. Jordan followed in 1994.

Egypt has not seen large protests since the latest Hamas-Israel war started; authorities have waged a heavy crackdown on dissent for over a decade. But fears that Israel could push the Gaza Strip's 2.3 million residents into Egypt's Sinai Peninsula, and soaring consumer prices amid runaway inflation could prove a volatile combination where a popular uprising toppled a U.S.-backed autocrat in 2011.

A small group of activists protested late Tuesday near the U.S. and U.K. embassies in central Cairo, calling on Egypt to cut ties with Israel and expel its ambassador. Authorities have beefed up security in Cairo's Maadi district, where the Israeli Embassy is located.

"The U.S. administration is a partner through supporting the crimes committed by the occupation military against the people of Gaza," said Khaled Dawoud, the spokesperson for a coalition of opposition political parties and public figures.

Protests also erupted in Lebanon, where Hezbollah has traded fire with Israeli forces at the border, threatening to enter the war with its massive arsenal of rockets, and as far away as Morocco.

"The Arab street has a voice. That voice may have been ignored in the past by governments in the region and the West ... but they cannot do this anymore," said Badr al-Saif, a history professor at Kuwait University. "People are on fire."

As recently as a couple of weeks ago, the regional outlook seemed far different.

In his address to the U.N. General Assembly last month, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu boasted that the Abraham Accords, the agreements in which four Arab states normalized relations with Israel in 2020, were a "pivot of history" that "heralded the dawn of a new age of peace."

He said Israel was "at the cusp of an even more dramatic breakthrough" — a historic agreement with Saudi Arabia that the Biden administration had been focused on in recent months.

The Abraham Accords, with the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Morocco and Sudan, were reached with autocratic leaders willing to set aside the Palestinian issue in order to secure their own benefits from the U.S. The UAE hoped for advanced fighter jets. Morocco won U.S. support for its claim to disputed Western Sahara, and Sudan's ruling military junta got longstanding U.S. sanctions lifted.

Saudi Arabia had asked for a U.S. defense pact and aid in establishing a civilian nuclear program, as well as a substantial concession to the Palestinians that the Saudis have yet to publicly spell out.

But despite all the high-level diplomacy, ordinary Arabs and Muslims still express strong solidarity with the Palestinian cause. During last year's World Cup soccer tournament, for example, Palestinian flags were waved in abundance even though the national team did not compete.

The recent devastation in Gaza has stirred those sentiments again, likely giving pause to the Saudis and

other governments that were considering normalization.

"No Arab government is able to extend its hand to Israel amid its aggression on the Palestinians," Ammar Ali Hassan, an Egyptian political scientist, said.

"The Arab peoples won't accept such a move. Even the rulers wouldn't benefit from such ties at this time," he said. "The war on Gaza has revived the Palestinian cause."

## Live updates | Biden meets with Israeli leaders as tensions grow after hospital blast in Gaza

By The Associated Press undefined

President Joe Biden is in Israel on an urgent mission to keep the Israel-Hamas war from spiraling into a broader regional conflict and to encourage the delivery of humanitarian aid to the Palestinians.

The president's visit on Wednesday comes after hundreds of people were reported killed in an explosion at a Gaza Strip hospital a day earlier. The Hamas militant group blamed the blast on an Israeli airstrike, while the Israeli military blamed a rocket misfired by other Palestinian militants.

Biden told Israeli leaders: "Based on what I've seen, it appears as though it was done by the other team, not you" but that there were "a lot of people out there" who weren't sure.

The war that began Oct. 7 has become the deadliest of five Gaza wars for both sides. The Gaza Health Ministry said 2,778 Palestinians have been killed and 9,700 wounded. That was before the blast at the al-Ahli Hospital on Tuesday night.

Another 1,200 people across Gaza are believed to be buried under the rubble, alive or dead. More than 1,400 people in Israel have been killed, and at least 199 others, including children, were captured by Hamas and taken into Gaza, according to Israeli authorities.

Currently:

1. Doctors in Gaza City performed surgery on floors, often without anesthesia, in a desperate bid to save badly wounded victims of a massive blast that killed civilians sheltering in a hospital. Video that The Associated Press confirmed was from the hospital showed the grounds strewn with torn bodies, blankets and school backpacks..

2. Rage at the hospital carnage spread through the Middle East. Protesters hurled stones at Palestinian security forces in the occupied West Bank and at riot police in neighboring Jordan, venting fury at their own leaders for failing to protect Palestinians. The leaders of Egypt and Jordan and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas called off a planned summit with Biden,

3. The U.N. Security Council is scheduled to vote on a resolution about the fighting between Hamas and Israel, but negotiations on the wording were still underway.

Here's what's happening in the latest Israel-Hamas war:

### ISRAELI AIRSTRIKE DESTROYS A BAKERY AT A GAZA REFUGEE CAMP

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip — Fierce Israeli airstrikes hit houses in Gaza City and the southern border town of Rafah. Near the port, survivors said an Israeli airstrike hit a three-story building belonging to the Haboush family, killing 40 people and wounding 25.

In the central Gaza Strip, an airstrike hit a bakery at the Nuseirat refugee camp and ignited a massive fire that killed four bakers. Dozens of other bakeries across Gaza were forced to shut down due to a lack of water and electricity.

Supermarkets have dwindling supplies and are unable to restock because wholesalers cannot navigate the territory's ravaged infrastructure to make deliveries.

The World Food Program has warned that Gaza's population is at "the risk of starvation" if 310 tons of food aid languishing at the Gaza-Egypt Rafah crossing are not urgently let through.

### IRAN'S FOREIGN MINISTER CALLS FOR OIL EMBARGO AGAINST ISRAEL

JERUSALEM — Iran's top diplomat is calling on Muslim nations to expel their Israeli ambassadors and launch an oil embargo on Israel after an explosion at a hospital in the Gaza Strip.

The comments Wednesday by Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian mark the first time an oil embargo

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has been discussed as Israel wages war on Hamas in the Gaza Strip after its unprecedented Oct. 7 attack.

"We expect the Islamic countries that have diplomatic relations with the Zionist regime to cut off their relations immediately and expel the Israeli ambassador from their country," Amirabdollahian said in a clip aired by state television in Iran. "Secondly, the export of oil to the country of Israel and any project that exists between any Islamic state and Israel must be stopped immediately."

There was no immediate acknowledgment of the call by Israel, nor any other nation. Amirabdollahian made the call while in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, for an emergency meeting of the 57-nation Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

## BRITISH FOREIGN SECRETARY URGES PEOPLE TO 'WAIT FOR FACTS' ON HOSPITAL BLAST

LONDON — British Foreign Secretary James Cleverly has urged people to "wait for the facts" about what caused the explosion at al-Ahli Hospital in Gaza.

The U.K. government has not formally attributed blame for the blast, which Hamas said was caused by an Israeli airstrike. The Israeli military said a rocket misfired by other Palestinian militants caused the massive explosion. President Joe Biden told Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Wednesday that the explosion appeared to not have been caused by Israel.

Cleverly wrote on X, formerly known as Twitter: "Last night, too many jumped to conclusions around the tragic loss of life at Al Ahli hospital. Getting this wrong would put even more lives at risk. Wait for the facts, report them clearly and accurately. Cool heads must prevail."

## SAVE THE CHILDREN CALLS FOR HUMANITARIAN CORRIDOR

As people in Gaza continue to suffer from dire shortages of water, food, electricity and fuel, aid organizations are pleading for a humanitarian corridor to allow for the entry of urgently needed supplies.

Jason Lee, Save the Children's country director for the Palestinian territory, told The Associated Press that until that happens humanitarian agencies will be unable to deliver life-saving and essential assistance — and that time is running out.

"We have no visibility in our offices, on warehouses, the facilities that we have because we have all been told to move south," he said. Despite this, some Save the Children staff are still delivering what services they can. "It is imperative once again, that the protection of civilians and adherence to international law is paramount. The rights of children apply all the time to every single child in every circumstance."

## POPE FRANCIS ANNOUNCES PRAYER FOR PEACE IN ST. PETER'S SQUARE

VATICAN CITY — Pope Francis has announced an evening prayer service in St. Peter's Square next week to pray for peace as he begged for an end to the Israeli-Hamas conflict and the unfolding "humanitarian catastrophe" in Gaza.

Francis announced the day of fasting and prayer Oct. 27 during his weekly general audience Wednesday. He urged all Christians and believers of other faiths to join in with local initiatives, while he presides over an evening hour of prayer in the Vatican.

Francis begged for all sides to do whatever is possible to prevent the war from spreading and to avoid a "humanitarian catastrophe" in Gaza, where a blast Tuesday at a hospital killed hundreds.

"Silence the weapons. Listen to the cry for peace of the poor, of the people, of children," he said. "War never resolves any problem. It only sows death and destruction, increases hatred, multiplies vendettas."

## BIDEN SAYS HOSPITAL BLAST IN GAZA APPEARS TO NOT HAVE BEEN CAUSED BY ISRAEL

TEL AVIV — President Joe Biden says that an explosion that killed hundreds in a Gaza Strip hospital appears to not have been caused by Israel.

"Based on what I've seen, it appears as though it was done by the other team, not you," Biden said Wednesday during a meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. But Biden said there were "a lot of people out there" who weren't sure what caused the blast.

The Hamas-run Gaza Health Ministry said an Israeli airstrike caused the destruction. The Israeli military denied involvement and blamed a misfired rocket from the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, another militant group. However, that organization also rejected responsibility.

## EGYPTIAN PRESIDENT REJECTS CALLS TO MOVE PALESTINIANS TO SINAI PENINSULA

CAIRO — Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi says his country rejects what he calls efforts to force



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Palestinians in Gaza to Egypt's Sinai Peninsula, warning that such an effort would jeopardize his country's peace with Israel.

Speaking at a joint press conference in Cairo with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, el-Sissi said Wednesday that his government views Israel's siege on Gaza, including cutting off water, food and fuel and preventing humanitarian aid from flowing into the territory as a scheme to expel the Palestinians to Egypt.

"We are rejecting the liquidation of the Palestinian cause and the explosion of Palestinians to Sinai," the Egyptian leader said, adding that Sinai would be turned into a launching ground for "terrorist attacks" against Israel, which would in turn blame Egypt for such attacks.

He proposed that Israel move the Palestinians to Negev in Israel until it ends "its announced mission" of destroying Palestinian militant groups.

## PRESIDENT BIDEN ARRIVES IN ISRAEL

TEL AVIV, Israel — President Joe Biden has arrived in Israel on an urgent mission to keep the Israel-Hamas war from spiraling into a broader regional conflict and to encourage the delivery of humanitarian aid to the Palestinians.

Air Force One landed at Ben Gurion Airport in Tel Aviv on Wednesday morning. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was on the tarmac to greet Biden and the two embraced.

Biden and Netanyahu were to meet then hold a broader meeting with members of Israel's war cabinet. White House officials say Biden will also meet with the country's first responders and with family members of those who were killed, wounded or taken hostage as part of the surprise attack by Hamas militants on Oct. 7.

Israel responded with a vow to destroy Hamas. The Israeli government also cut off food, fuel, water and other supplies to the Gaza Strip, sparking a humanitarian crisis among Palestinian civilians living there.

Biden's plans to also meet with Arab leaders in Jordan were called off after hundreds were reported killed in an explosion at a Gaza Strip hospital.

## GERMAN SYNAGOGUE ATTACKED WITH MOLOTOV COCKTAILS, POLICE SAY

BERLIN — A Berlin synagogue has been attacked with Molotov cocktails, police in Germany say. It comes as antisemitic incidents in the German capital have been rising following the violent escalation in the Middle East.

The Kahal Adass Jisroel community said its synagogue in the city's Mitte neighborhood was attacked early Wednesday with two incendiary devices. The complex in the center of Berlin houses a synagogue, a kindergarten and a community center.

Police also said there were riots overnight between Muslim immigrants and police in the city's Neukoelln and Kreuzberg neighborhoods and at Berlin's landmark Brandenburg Gate in which several officers were injured.

## RAFAH BORDER CROSSING REMAINS SHUT, EGYPTIAN OFFICIAL SAYS

CAIRO — No humanitarian aid or people were passing through the Rafah border crossing as of Wednesday morning, an Egyptian official said. The official spoke on condition of anonymity since he was not authorized to speak with the media.

During an interview with CNN on Tuesday evening, Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry said Rafah was not open due the damage inflicted by numerous Israeli airstrikes on the access roads linking the Egyptian and the Gaza sides of the crossing.

"The Rafah crossing over the last days has been bombed four times," Shoukry said. "Among them, once when we were trying to repair some of the damage. Four Egyptian workers were injured."

Hamas' border authorities did not immediately respond to AP's request for comment.

## ISRAELI MILITARY LAYS OUT INTELLIGENCE ON HOSPITAL EXPLOSION

JERUSALEM — An Israeli military spokesman said Israel crosschecked intelligence that proved a failed Islamic Jihad rocket launch caused a deadly explosion at a Gaza hospital.

Had it been an Israeli strike, "we would have seen craters and structural damage to the building, both of which haven't been identified," Rear Admiral Daniel Hagari said.

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Most of the damage was caused by propellant in the rocket and not by the warhead, he said. Propellant remained because the launch failed and the rocket didn't travel as far as intended, he said.

According to Israeli intelligence reports, Islamic Jihad fired about 10 rockets from a nearby cemetery at 6:59 p.m. Tuesday, and there were reports of an explosion at the hospital at that time, Hagari said..

He alleged that Hamas understood it was an Islamic Jihad rocket that misfired but "launched a global media campaign to hide what really happened."

## GAZA'S LARGEST HOSPITAL WILL SOON RUN OUT OF FUEL

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip — Shifa Hospital, where hundreds of victims of the al-Ahli Hospital blast were taken, will run out of fuel on Wednesday unless more supplies enter the Gaza Strip, the hospital's general director says.

The hospital, Gaza's largest, is stretched far beyond its capacity following the al-Ahli explosion, Mohammed Abu Selmia said Wednesday, adding that health workers were still treating severely wounded patients.

"They are all in a terrible situation," he told The Associated Press. "A young woman whose limbs were amputated, a child whose intestines came out, many others have had limb amputations, bleeding in the brain, bleeding in the liver and spleen."

He said earlier that doctors were performing operations on the floor without anesthesia and that a shortage of essential medical supplies was an urgent issue.

If the hospital runs out of fuel, it could be forced into a total shutdown of services, he said.

## ISRAELI AIRSTRIKES CONTINUE, GAZA'S INTERIOR MINISTRY SAYS

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip — Gaza's Interior Ministry said Israel renewed airstrikes before dawn on Wednesday and hit locations across the Gaza Strip after the blast at al-Ahli Hospital. At least 37 people were killed following attacks in the al-Qasasib and Halima al-Saadia areas of Jabalia, north of Gaza, it said.

## HEZBOLLAH SAYS IT HIT ISRAELI TANK, INFLECTING CASUALTIES

BEIRUT — Lebanon's Hezbollah militant group says its fighters have hit an Israeli Merkava tank with an anti-tank missile, inflicting casualties among the troops.

The group said the attack early Wednesday targeted an Israeli army position across the border from the Lebanese village of Aita al-Shaab. The Israeli army said it is checking reports that an anti-tank missile was fired from Lebanon.

## JORDAN'S FOREIGN MINISTER SAYS SUMMIT 'WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO STOP WAR NOW'

AMMAN, Jordan — Jordan canceled a planned summit with President Joe Biden, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi and Jordan's King Abdullah II because it "would not be able to stop the war now," Jordan's deputy prime minister and minister of foreign affairs said.

Ayman Al-Safadi said in a statement on Wednesday that "Jordan will continue to work with everyone so that when this summit is held, it will be able to achieve what is required of it, which is to stop the war, deliver humanitarian support to the people of Gaza, and put an end to this crisis."

The summit, originally scheduled for later Wednesday, was cancelled after a blast at a Gaza City hospital killed hundreds of people, according to the Hamas-run Health Ministry. Hamas blamed an Israeli airstrike, while the Israeli military blamed a rocket misfired by other Palestinian militants.

## US STATE DEPARTMENT RAISES TRAVEL ADVISORY FOR LEBANON

WASHINGTON — The State Department has raised the travel advisory for Lebanon, urging people not to travel to the country "due to the unpredictable security situation related to rocket, missile, and artillery exchanges between Israel and Hizballah or other armed militant factions."

The advisory issued on Tuesday also urged people to reconsider travel to Lebanon "due to terrorism, civil unrest, armed conflict, crime, kidnapping" and the U.S. Embassy in Beirut's limited capacity to provide support to U.S. citizens. The State Department authorized the voluntary, temporary departure of family members of U.S. government personnel and some non-emergency personnel from the U.S. Embassy in Beirut due to the unpredictable security situation in Lebanon.

The advisory was hiked to Level 4, "Do not travel" — the highest level — from Level 3, "Reconsider travel."

## Gaza's doctors struggle to save hospital blast survivors as Middle East rage grows

By NAJIB JOBAIN, ISABEL DEBRE, RAVI NESSMAN and MATTHEW LEE Associated Press  
KHAN YOUNIS, Gaza Strip (AP) — Doctors in Gaza City faced with dwindling medical supplies performed surgery on hospital floors, often without anesthesia, in a desperate bid to save badly wounded victims of a massive blast that killed civilians sheltering in a nearby hospital amid Israeli bombings and a blockade of the territory.

The Hamas militant group blamed the blast on an Israeli airstrike, while the Israeli military blamed a rocket misfired by other Palestinian militants. At least 500 people were killed, the Hamas-run Health Ministry said.

Rage at the hospital carnage spread through the Middle East as U.S. President Joe Biden landed in Israel in hopes of stopping a spread of the war, which started after Hamas militants attacked towns and cities across southern Israel Oct. 7.

Biden embraced Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on his arrival and later said the blast appeared not to be Israel's fault. "Based on what I've seen, it appears as though it was done by the other team, not you," he told Netanyahu in remarks in front of the media.

During his visit, Biden planned to meet with first responders and with family members of those who were killed, wounded or taken hostage in the Hamas attack.

Shortly before Biden's arrival, Palestinian rocket attacks on Israel resumed after a 12-hour lull.

Israeli strikes on Gaza continued on Wednesday, including attacks on cities in south Gaza that Israel had described as "safe zones" for Palestinian civilians.

After the hospital blast, Jordan canceled a meeting between Biden, Jordan's King Abdullah II, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi. Biden will now visit only Israel, a White House official said.

The war between Israel and Hamas was "pushing the region to the brink," Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi told state-run television.

The Israeli military held a briefing Wednesday morning laying out its case for why it was not responsible for the explosion at the al-Ahli Hospital. It was not firing in the area, Israeli military spokesman Rear Admiral Daniel Hagari said.

Instead, Hagari said, Israeli radar confirmed a rocket barrage fired by the Palestinian militant group Islamic Jihad from a nearby cemetery at that time of the blast, around 6:59 p.m. Independent video showed one of the rockets in the barrage falling out of the sky, he said.

The misfired rocket hit the parking lot outside the hospital. Were it an airstrike, there would have been a crater there; instead, the fiery blast came from the misfired rocket's warhead and its unspent propellant, he said.

The Israeli military also released a recording they said was between two Hamas militants discussing the blast, during which the speakers say it was believed to be an Islamic Jihad misfire and that the shrapnel appeared to be from IJ weapons, not Israel's.

Hagari said Israeli's intelligence would be shared with U.S. and British officials. He also questioned the death toll provided by Gaza's Hamas-led health ministry.

Since the war began, roughly 450 rockets fired at Israel by militant groups had landed in Gaza, the military said.

Hamas called Tuesday's hospital blast "a horrific massacre," saying it was caused by an Israeli strike.

Islamic Jihad dismissed Israel's claims, accusing Israel of "trying hard to evade responsibility for the brutal massacre it committed."

The group pointed to Israel's order that Al-Ahli be evacuated and reports of a previous strike at the hospital as proof that the hospital was an Israeli target. It also said the scale of the explosion, the angle of the bomb's fall and the extent of the destruction all pointed to Israel.

The blast left gruesome scenes. Hundreds of Palestinians had taken refuge in al-Ahli and other hospitals in Gaza City, hoping they would be spared bombardment after Israel ordered all residents of the city and



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surrounding areas to evacuate to the southern Gaza Strip.

Ghassan Abu Sitta, a plastic surgeon working at al-Alhi, said he heard a loud explosion and the ceiling of his operating room collapsed.

"The wounded started stumbling toward us," he wrote in an account posted to Facebook. He saw hundreds of dead and severely wounded people. "I put a tourniquet on the thigh of a man who had his leg blown off and then went to tend to a man with a penetrating neck injury," he said.

Video that The Associated Press confirmed was from the hospital showed the hospital grounds strewn with torn bodies, many of them young children, as fire engulfed the building. The grass was strewn with blankets, school backpacks and other belongings. On Wednesday morning the blast scene was littered with charred cars and the ground was blackened by debris.

Ambulances and private cars rushed some 350 casualties to Gaza City's main hospital, al-Shifa, which was already overwhelmed with wounded from other strikes, said its director, Mohammed Abu Selmia.

Victims arrived with gruesome injuries, Gaza Health Ministry spokesperson Ashraf al-Qidra said. Some were decapitated, disemboweled, or missing limbs.

Doctors in the overwhelmed hospital resorted to performing surgery on floors and in the halls, mostly without anesthesia.

"We need equipment, we need medicine, we need beds, we need anesthesia, we need everything," Abu Selmia said. He warned that fuel for the hospital's generators would run out within hours, forcing a complete shutdown, unless supplies enter the Gaza Strip.

The bloodshed unfolded as the U.S. tried to convince Israel to allow the delivery of supplies to desperate civilians, aid groups and hospitals in the tiny Gaza Strip, which has been under a complete siege since Hamas' deadly rampage last week. Hundreds of thousands of increasingly desperate people were searching for bread and water.

The Gaza Health Ministry said at least 3,200 people have been killed in Gaza and 11,000 wounded. Another 1,200 people across Gaza are believed to be buried under the rubble, alive or dead, health authorities said.

More than 1,400 people in Israel have been killed, mostly civilians who were slain in Hamas' Oct. 7 attack. The assault also resulted in some 200 being taken captive into Gaza. Militants in Gaza have launched rockets every day since, aiming at cities across Israel.

Protests erupted across the Middle East. In Amman, a palace statement said Jordan's king condemned "the ugly massacre perpetrated by Israel against innocent civilians."

The king "warned that this war, which has entered a dangerous phase, will plunge the region into an unspeakable disaster," the statement said.

With troops massed along the border, Israel has been expected to launch a ground invasion into Gaza.

Throughout the day Tuesday, airstrikes killed dozens of civilians and at least one senior Hamas figure in the southern half of the Gaza Strip, where the Israeli military told fleeing Palestinians to go. An Associated Press reporter saw around 50 bodies brought to Nasser Hospital after strikes in the southern city of Khan Younis.

The Israeli military said it was targeting Hamas hideouts, infrastructure and command centers.

Netanyahu sought to put the blame on Hamas for Israel's retaliatory attacks and the rising civilian casualties in Gaza. "Not only is it targeting and murdering civilians with unprecedented savagery, it's hiding behind civilians," he said.

With Israel barring entry of most water, fuel and food into Gaza since Hamas' brutal attack, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken secured an agreement with Netanyahu to discuss creation of a mechanism for delivering aid to the territory's 2.3 million people. But aid was not getting in as of Wednesday morning.

More than 1 million Palestinians have fled their homes — roughly half of Gaza's population — and 60% are now in the approximately 14-kilometer (8-mile) long area south of the evacuation zone, the U.N. said.

The Israeli military again called on Palestinians to move out of Gaza City and head south, saying that if aid were to be delivered it would be near the city of Khan Younis in south Gaza.

At the Rafah crossing, Gaza's only connection to Egypt, truckloads of aid have been waiting to enter.

No humanitarian aid was passing through Rafah as of Wednesday morning, an Egyptian official said,

speaking on condition of anonymity because he was not allowed to speak with the media.

## **The German chancellor condemns a firebomb attack on a Berlin synagogue and vows protection for Jews**

By KIRSTEN GRIESHABER Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — German Chancellor Olaf Scholz strongly condemned a firebomb assault on a synagogue in Berlin on Wednesday, saying “we will never accept when attacks are carried out against Jewish institutions.”

Assailants threw two Molotov cocktails early Wednesday at the synagogue in the center of the German capital, police said, as antisemitic incidents in the country have been rising following the violent escalation in the Middle East.

“Unknown persons threw two Molotov cocktails from the street,” the Kahal Adass Jisroel community wrote on X, formerly Twitter. Dozens of police officers were investigating in front of the synagogue in the city’s Mitte neighborhood, and the entire street next to the building was cordoned off and blocked for traffic.

Police said they were investigating “an attempted serious arson” in which two people approached the synagogue by foot at 3:45 a.m. and threw two Molotov cocktails, which burst on the sidewalk next to the building. The two people, their faces covered, ran away.

A couple of hours later, when police were already investigating the incident, a 30-year-old man approached the synagogue on a scooter, threw it aside and tried running toward the building. When police officers detained him, he resisted and shouted anti-Israeli slogans.

“We are all shocked by this terrorist attack,” Germany’s leading Jewish group, the Central Council of Jews said in a statement. “Above all, the families from the neighborhood around the synagogue are shocked and unsettled. Words become deeds. Hamas’ ideology of extermination against everything Jewish is also having an effect in Germany.”

The building complex of the Kahal Adass Jisroel community in the center of Berlin houses a synagogue, a kindergarten, a yeshiva school and a community center.

Police also said there were riots overnight between Muslim immigrants and police in the city’s Neukoelln and Kreuzberg neighborhoods and at Berlin’s landmark Brandenburg Gate in which several officers were injured.

Scholz, who was speaking to reporters during a trip to Egypt on Wednesday, said that Germany would not accept violent and antisemitic protests and that the protection of Jewish institutions would be further increased.

“It outrages me personally what some of them are shouting and doing, and I am convinced that Germany’s citizen are of the same opinion as me,” Scholz said.

“We stand united for the protection also of Jews” in Germany, the chancellor added.

Shlomo Afanasev, a rabbi and long-time member of the Kahal Adass Jisroel community, said he was shocked by the attack.

“I go to the synagogue since 2006, and ... I always go with my kippah on,” he told The Associated Press. “We felt until today very safe here. And never thought something like this could happen in this area. In the middle of Berlin.”

Afanasev added that he would wear a baseball hat from now on to cover his skullcap because “I don’t want to be openly Jewish ... outside, because it doesn’t feel safe anymore. Unfortunately.”

Following Hamas’ brutal attack on Israel on Oct. 7 and the subsequent war in Gaza, police have increased security for Jewish institutions in Berlin and all over Germany. Still, Israeli flags that were flown as a sign of solidarity in front of city halls all over the country have been torn down and burnt. Several building in Berlin where Jews live had the star of David painted on doors and walls.

## **Europe is looking to fight the flood of Chinese electric vehicles. But Europeans love them**

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By KELVIN CHAN AP Business Writer

LONDON (AP) — When Laima Springe-Janssen was looking to replace her French-made gasoline-powered SUV with an electric car, she considered models from Volvo and Nissan.

The Volvo extras she wanted would have busted her budget, while the Nissan lacked the “wow factor.” The Copenhagen, Denmark, resident ended up buying a compact SUV from China’s BYD.

“I really, really love the car,” Springe-Janssen said. For the equivalent of about \$50,000, the Atto 3 SUV came with “all these goodies” like a 360-degree dash cam, two years of free charging and an extra set of winter tires.

Her husband likes it so much he’s considering buying another BYD to replace their other car, from Volkswagen’s Skoda brand.

“I’m sorry, Europe. Go home,” she said. “China has a better offer.”

Her enthusiasm underscores how Chinese automakers are winning over drivers as they make major inroads into Europe’s electric vehicle market, challenging long-established homegrown brands in an industry that’s key to the continent’s green energy transition.

The competitive threat has spurred the European Union to launch an investigation into Beijing’s support for its EV industry. That adds to tech-related tensions between the West and China, which is one of Europe’s biggest trading partners and the world’s biggest auto market.

China’s EV onslaught, along with massive U.S. clean energy funding that has drawn investment away from Europe, shows how the 27-nation bloc is caught in the middle of the global race for green technology.

Chinese EV makers are drawn to Europe because auto import tariffs are just 10% versus 27.5% in the U.S., independent auto analyst Matthias Schmidt said. Europe also has the world’s second-biggest EV battery market after China.

Nevermind the geopolitics. Climate-conscious car buyers in Europe who are grappling with an increased cost of living rave about how Chinese EVs are affordable yet packed with features and stylish design. Concerns about the threat to local carmakers and jobs just aren’t a factor for them.

British retiree John Kirkwood replaced his Volkswagen Passat three years ago with an MG5 station wagon because the 30,000-pound (\$36,000) price tag “wiped the floor” with its nearest rival — a Kia that cost thousands more.

“It’s nice. It’s quiet, it’s refined” and very quick, Kirkwood said, adding that he had few qualms about British brand MG’s Chinese ownership.

MG — owned by SAIC Motor, China’s biggest automaker — is the largest Chinese EV player in Europe. BYD, backed by billionaire investor Warren Buffett, is growing fast. There’s also Geely, which owns Sweden’s Volvo and a stable of EV brands including Polestar, Lynk & Co. and British sportscar maker Lotus.

Behind them are a slew of startups, like NIO and Xpeng.

Their combined sales are a sliver of the 9.2 million vehicles sold in Europe every year, but they have been gobbling up a piece of the smaller EV market at an astonishing pace.

Chinese automakers account for only about 3% of Western Europe’s overall car market but 8.4% of the EV market, up from 6.2% last year and almost nothing in 2019, according to Schmidt’s data.

The surge is stoking fears about Europe’s automotive industry, an economic powerhouse centered in France and Germany that employs millions of workers, staying competitive as it transitions from fossil fuels to electricity.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen says “global markets are now flooded with cheaper Chinese electric cars,” with prices “kept artificially low by huge state subsidies.”

The commission, the EU’s executive arm, formally opened its investigation this month, saying it would take up to 13 months and could result in import duties.

Beijing voiced “strong dissatisfaction” and vowed to “firmly safeguard” Chinese companies’ rights. The Chinese Commerce Ministry said the EU probe is based on “subjective assumptions,” lacks enough evidence and goes against World Trade Organization rules.

Complicating matters, global automakers build vehicles in China and have exported 164,300 this year to

Europe, including BMW's iX3 SUV made in northeastern Shenyang and Tesla's Model 3 and Y produced in Shanghai, according to Schmidt's data. That means one in every five EVs sold in Europe is a Chinese import.

A commission spokesman said the investigation is looking at China's EV exports "regardless of the brand."

Stellantis, which owns French auto brands Peugeot and Citroen as well as Italy's Alfa Romeo and Fiat, is vowing to fight back against China's EVs. In a recent earnings call, CEO Carlos Tavares said the world's No. 3 automaker is responding to a "Chinese invasion in a European market" with a new Citroen e-C3 cheap compact.

Stellantis faces added pressure from a union strike in the U.S. over EV battery plant jobs.

Executives at Shanghai-based Aiways, a startup headed by Volvo's former China sales chief, rejected accusations that Beijing provides a helping hand.

"We're not selling inside China, we're not being subsidized in China," said Alexander Klose, vice president of overseas operations. "Yes, we obviously have some subsidies for putting a plant somewhere, which is, I think, what everybody has in Europe."

Aiways is focusing on Europe and Israel instead of China, where the auto market is so crowded that "we don't think it makes sense to compete right now," Klose said.

The EU should be working on getting to a green future "rather than keeping competition out," he said.

One reason Chinese companies can offer high-quality cars at affordable prices stems from the rules to enter the Chinese market. Global automakers had to team up with local companies, providing them crucial automaking knowhow.

"They were kind of like the sous chefs to the Western companies," said Schmidt, the auto analyst. "The situation now is those sous chefs are opening up their own restaurants and, in some cases, better than their masters' restaurants."

Also helping level the playing field is battery-powered motors being less complex to build than internal combustion engines and requiring fewer workers. That's a problem for European brands with big workforces that will need years to revamp operations, Schmidt said.

Chinese EV makers, meanwhile, are trying to stand out in a crowded field.

SUV maker Great Wall Motors' EV sub-brand Ora is targeting women, with cars it says are designed for their body sizes and daily needs.

The Ora Funky Cat, with throwback round headlights, an exclamation mark on its hood badge, and a 32,000-pound (\$38,600) price tag, appealed to British scriptwriter Justin Nicholls, who bought one for his wife.

"The looks are awesome, and the tech great. It's so easy to drive, yet feels like a lot larger car and feels premium," he said.

It also appealed to Nicholls because it's different from the Volkswagens, Peugeots and BMWs common on British roads: "I think it is a lot more quirky than European cars."

## **UN to vote on Gaza resolution that would condemn attack by Hamas and all violence against civilians**

By EDITH M. LEDERER Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — The U.N. Security Council scheduled a Wednesday vote on a resolution that initially condemned "the heinous terrorist attacks by Hamas" on Israel as well as all violence against civilians, while calling for "humanitarian pauses" to deliver desperately needed aid to millions in Gaza.

Negotiations on wording of the draft resolution sponsored by Brazil continued throughout Tuesday, and the final version to be voted on had not been released by late Tuesday.

The vote follows the council's rejection Monday evening of a Russian-drafted resolution that condemned violence and terrorism against civilians and called for a "humanitarian cease-fire" but made no mention of Hamas.

Russia has proposed two amendments to the Brazil resolution that will be voted on first. One calls for a "humanitarian cease-fire." The other would condemn indiscriminate attacks on civilians and assaults on



“civilian objects” in Gaza like hospitals and schools that deprive people of the means to survive.

Brazil holds the Security Council presidency this month and its U.N. mission said the vote would be followed by an emergency meeting to discuss Tuesday’s huge explosion and fire at a Gaza City hospital packed with patients, relatives and Palestinians seeking shelter. The Hamas-run health ministry said at least 500 died.

Russia, the United Arab Emirates and China called for the emergency session, at which U.N. political chief Rosemary DiCarlo and U.N. Mideast envoy Tor Wennesland were to brief council members.

Israel and the Palestinians accused each other of being responsible for the hospital carnage. Hamas said it was from an Israeli airstrike. Israel blamed a misfired rocket by the Palestinian militant group Islamic Jihad. Islamic Jihad denied any involvement.

The divided Security Council has been even more polarized since Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022, and whether its five veto-wielding permanent members — the United States, Russia, China, Britain and France — would support the Brazil resolution or abstain in the vote remained to be seen.

To be adopted, a resolution needs at least nine of the 15 council members to vote “yes” and no veto by a permanent member.

The council vote was taking place amid frantic diplomatic efforts to prevent the Israeli-Hamas conflict from spreading. U.S. President Joe Biden was on a lightning trip to Israel to meet with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to try to prevent the war’s expansion in the region and to open corridors for the delivery of aid to Gazans.

After the hospital blast, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas backed out of a meeting with Biden, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi and King Abdullah II of Jordan, leading the Jordanians to cancel the meeting,

The 22-member Arab Group at the United Nations expressed “outrage” at the hospital deaths and called for an immediate cease-fire to avoid further Palestinian casualties, the opening of a corridor to safely deliver aid to millions in Gaza, and the prevention of any forced evacuation of people from the territory.

Egypt’s U.N. ambassador, Osama Mahmoud, told reporters that a summit will take place Saturday in Cairo as scheduled with regional leaders and U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres. The five permanent Security Council nations are also invited, he said.

Mahmoud said the summit will address the humanitarian crisis sparked by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, how to achieve a cease-fire, and whether “any serious attempt to have a political horizon” exists to tackle the issues blocking an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement.

## **Italy’s far-right Premier Meloni defies fears of harming democracy and clashing with the EU**

By FRANCES D’EMILIO Associated Press

ROME (AP) — When Giorgia Meloni took office a year ago as the first far-right premier in Italy’s post-war history, many in Europe worried about the prospect of the country’s democratic backsliding and resistance to European Union rules.

The European Commission president issued a decidedly undiplomatic warning that Europe had “the tools” to deal with any member, including Italy, if things went “in a difficult direction.” There were fears in Brussels that Rome could join a strident nationalist bloc, notably Hungary and Poland, in a clash with EU democratic standards.

But since being sworn in, Meloni, whose Brothers of Italy party has neo-fascist roots, has confounded Western skeptics.

She has steadfastly backed NATO support for Ukraine, especially on military aid for Kyiv against Russia’s invasion. That’s no small feat.

Her main governing coalition partners are parties whose leadership was long marked by pro-Russian sympathies — the League of Matteo Salvini, and Forza Italia, founded by Silvio Berlusconi, the late former premier who was feted at his last birthday with bottles of vodka sent by Russian President Vladimir Putin.

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The first woman to be Italy's premier, Meloni "won out against Salvini and Berlusconi. She showed that she emancipated herself against these two male leaders," said political analyst Massimo Franco.

While Meloni ran an election campaign "raging against Europe" and "promising she would clash with Brussels over budget issues" once in office, she didn't do either, noted Tommaso Grossi, a policy analyst for the European Policy Centre, a Brussels-based think tank.

Meloni's first trip abroad as premier was to Brussels. After meeting with the EU's most powerful officials, including Commission President Ursula von der Leyen — who raised the democracy warning — Meloni ventured that the encounters probably helped "dismantle a narrative about yours truly."

When Meloni was hosted at the White House in July by President Joe Biden, the welcome was warm — reflecting in part her apparent resolve to end Italy's participation in a Chinese infrastructure-building initiative known as Belt and Road that has worried the West.

Fears for Italy's democracy have proved to be "exaggerated," said Franco, who noted that Italy's president serves as a guarantor of the republic's post-war constitution. "The real risk for Italy is not authoritarian, it's chaos, it's an incompetent ruling class."

In her own words, Meloni's biggest challenge is illegal migration.

"Clearly I had hoped to do better on migrants," she told Italian Rai state TV in an interview marking her year in office. "The results weren't what we had hoped to see."

Meloni had campaigned with an unrealistic — and unrealized — promise of a naval blockade of the northern African coasts where migrant smugglers launch overcrowded, unseaworthy vessels toward Italy. By mid-October, the number of migrants arriving by boat has nearly doubled to 140,000 compared to the same period a year ago.

Von der Leyen stood by Meloni's side in solidarity on the tiny Italian island of Lampedusa, after some 7,000 migrants had stepped ashore there in just over one day last month. She borrowed one of Meloni's favorite lines: "We will decide who comes to the European Union, and under what circumstances. Not the smugglers."

Tunisian and not Libyan shores are now the main launching site for smugglers' boats. Meloni had lobbied heavily for an EU arrangement with Tunisia that offered the economically struggling country aid in hopes of encouraging a crackdown on the departures, but the agreement is in danger of unraveling.

Meloni, meanwhile, is feeling the heat from her ally-cum-rival Salvini, who appears determined to prove he's more "far right" of her, notably on migration, ahead of European Parliament elections set for June 2024, when the issue is expected to loom large.

As interior minister in a 2018-2019 populist government, Salvini kept rescue boats in the Mediterranean waiting days, even weeks, for permission to enter port to disembark migrants.

"With Salvini as (interior) minister, all this wasn't happening," said the regional affairs minister, Roberto Calderoli, sniping at Meloni after she appointed Salvini her transport minister, not interior minister as he had hoped.

Meloni criticized Italian judges who have defied a recent Cabinet decree that allows migrants who lost asylum bids and who come from so-called "safe" countries — like Tunisia — to be put in holding centers for as long as 18 months, pending repatriation. To avoid that, the migrants can pay a deposit of nearly 5,000 euros (\$5,500) — a sum most can't afford. Concluding those restrictions violate the Italian Constitution, some judges let the migrants go free.

Meloni contends the rulings support a long-held belief on the political right that Italy's magistrates sympathize with the left.

The premier has had other setbacks. A Cabinet decree targeted banks with a tax on so-called "extra-profits" derived from higher interest rates on mortgages and business loans. But Deputy Premier Antonio Tajani objected, forcing the decree to be rewritten. Tajani holds the helm of Berlusconi's party, and the media mogul's family holds a large stake in an Italian bank.

When Meloni's government sought to solve a shortage of Italy's taxis — acutely felt during a boom in foreign tourists — by liberalizing issuance of new cab licenses, taxi drivers staged a nationwide 24-hour

strike.

"I see, not a catastrophe, but very bad governance," Grossi said in a phone interview from Brussels to evaluate the premier's first year.

Her other goals include the protection of Italy's "traditional families;" Meloni campaigned with thundering cries against "gender ideology." Making its way through Parliament, and modeled on a bill Meloni introduced while an opposition lawmaker, is a proposal to make it a crime for Italians to use surrogate maternity abroad.

Despite Brothers of Italy's roots in a party formed by nostalgists for fascist dictator Benito Mussolini, Meloni has insisted that she doesn't hold the "cult of fascism."

After the Oct. 7 Hamas attack in Israel, she went to Rome's main synagogue and pledged to defend Jewish citizens against "every form of antisemitism." Jews number fewer than 30,000 in Italy, a nation of some 57 million people.

The head of the Union of Italian Jewish Communities, Noemi Di Segni, said she'd like Meloni to be clearer about the harm Mussolini caused Jews. "For her it should be easy," Di Segni said in an interview. "It's the past."

There are signs Meloni's perspective on history is evolving. On Monday, the 80th anniversary of the roundup of Jews in Nazi-occupied Rome, Meloni issued a statement decrying the "fascist complicity" in sending 1,259 people from the city — nearly all would perish — to Nazi-run death camps.

Since becoming premier, Meloni has topped surveys of eligible voters, hovering near 30% — compared to the 26% of votes her party garnered in the 2022 election.

"The lack of a progressive, strongly pro-European alternative is definitely missing in Italy, and that also, of course, helps Meloni feel more stable," said Grossi.

For her second year, Meloni pledges to work for a constitutional reform to make the premiership directly chosen by voters, in hopes of producing more stable governments. Currently, Italy's president asks someone likely able to command a parliamentary majority the task of forming a government.

Since 1946, Italy's governments have lasted an average of 361 days.

## **In big year for labor, California Gov. Gavin Newsom delivers both wins and surprises**

By SOPHIE AUSTIN Associated Press/Report for America

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — California Gov. Gavin Newsom again seized the national spotlight this year as he signed some of the most ambitious laws in the country to raise worker wages and to force companies to disclose a wide range of climate emissions, efforts that further cement the state's — and the governor's — status as a leader on a host of liberal causes.

But the Democrat disappointed some progressive advocates as he vetoed high-profile bills to give unemployment benefits to striking workers, require courts to weigh a parent's support of their child's gender identity in custody proceedings and decriminalize some psychedelic drugs. He also supported a controversial bill to force more people into mental health or addiction treatment, a proposal aimed at addressing the state's persistent homelessness crisis.

His actions on more than 1,000 pieces of legislation — nearly 15% of which he vetoed — showcase how Newsom plans to govern in his second and final term as leader of the nation's most populous state. Newsom's moves are increasingly seen through the lens of a possible presidential bid beyond 2024, though he insists he does not plan to run.

Some observers say his moves are largely consistent with both the views of California voters and the political tone that Newsom struck in his first term.

While Newsom delighted labor advocates with many of his signatures, he also angered them with some vetoes. He even won praise from Republicans for signing a bill to increase penalties for child sex trafficking after criticizing some Democratic lawmakers for initially opposing the bill.

Political consultant Elizabeth Ashford, who advises Assembly Speaker Robert Rivas and has worked for

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former governors Jerry Brown and Arnold Schwarzenegger, is skeptical of the idea that Newsom's actions are about appealing to a national audience. If he's taking more moderate stances on some issues, including crime and homelessness, it's likely in response to what California voters want, she said.

Indeed, California's unabated homelessness crisis and the proliferation of fentanyl on the streets have been among the most visible and stubborn issues during Newsom's tenure.

"I think that it's very much how you see both Jerry Brown and Arnold Schwarzenegger move into a more middle posture," Ashford said. "It's because that's what Californians want their governor to be."

Newsom's actions reflect that he is "a consistently left-of-center Democratic governor," said Wesley Hussey, a political science professor at California State University, Sacramento. "I think maybe he draws the line where it's going to cost the state a lot more money."

Newsom justified many of his vetoes — such as on a bill to make free condoms available to public high school students — by saying there was not enough money in the state budget to cover the cost. It came after he worked with lawmakers this year to try to close a projected \$31.5 billion budget deficit.

Californians typically rank the economy and jobs as the most important issues in the state, said Mark Baldassare, the statewide survey director at the Public Policy Institute of California, and Newsom signed key legislation aimed at boosting workers. Health care workers will gradually receive a minimum hourly wage of \$25, fast-food workers will be paid at least \$20 an hour, workers will get more paid sick leave and lower-level legislative staffers will be able to unionize.

But in a year when hotel workers, Hollywood actors and writers, and health care workers went on strike, Newsom also vetoed a bill that would have given unemployment benefits to striking workers.

Lorena Gonzalez Fletcher, who heads the California Labor Federation, said "it's almost cruel" that workers who go on strike aren't guaranteed insurance benefits.

"We have workers who are putting everything on the line right now by going on strike," she said. "They're doing this because, quite honestly, this economy has failed them."

Newsom also vetoed a bill that would have protected domestic workers who get injured or sick on the job and a proposal to save driver jobs while automated semi-trucks are tested for their safety on public roads.

In recent years, Californians have had to cope with wildfires, intense heat waves, and violent winds and rain. So it's not surprising that many of them also say the environment is one of the state's most pressing issues, Baldassare said.

Newsom started the year off by pushing a proposal to punish oil companies for profiting from high gas prices. The idea evolved from a tax on oil company profits to a law that makes regulators decide whether to penalize oil companies for price gouging. So far no penalties have been placed on oil companies, and Republicans still fault Newsom for failing to tackle the state's sky-high gas prices.

He also signed two climate proposals that are the most aggressive mandates of their kind in the country: One to require companies making more than \$1 billion annually to disclose their direct and indirect emissions, and another to require companies making more than \$500 million annually to disclose how climate change poses a risk to them financially.

"He cares about climate, he cares about being a national leader on climate, and this is how he does it," said Melissa Romero, deputy legislative director at advocacy group California Environmental Voters.

Homelessness also remains top of mind for voters in the state with the highest unhoused population in the country. Newsom sent two measures to voters aimed at transforming the state's mental health system and addressing the homelessness crisis. He also signed a law to force more people into treatment if they have untreated mental illness or addiction issues and are unable to provide themselves with basic needs like food and shelter. The policies are controversial and reflect Newsom's desire to tackle an issue that's often the subject of national criticism.

Assemblymember Chris Ward, a Democrat and vice chair of the California Legislative LGBTQ Caucus, said it was a "very successful year" for laws strengthening protections for LGBTQ+ people in the state. Newsom signed legislation to make sure LGBTQ+ foster youth are placed with families able to support their well-being, train school staff to better support LGBTQ+ students and seal legal gender-change petition documents for minors.



Still, Newsom surprised some when he vetoed a bill that would have required courts to weigh a parent's affirmation of their child's gender identity in custody and visitation cases. He said he vetoed it in part because he was concerned about lawmakers using their power to dictate "in prescriptive terms" how judges make decisions and warned such an approach could be alternatively used to "to diminish the civil rights of vulnerable communities." Ward disagreed with that reasoning, saying judges regularly rely on language from laws passed by the Legislature to help inform their decisions.

Something else out-of-the-ordinary happened in California politics this year: Newsom took the unusual step of publicly opposing a move by lawmakers in his party to block a bill authored by a Republican. The dispute revolved around legislation to increase penalties for child traffickers.

State Sen. Shannon Grove, who introduced the bill, does not remember something like that happening since she first arrived at the Legislature in 2010. Newsom spoke with her after the bill was initially blocked, she said.

"He just said that 'I'm disappointed in what happened in public safety,'" Grove said. "And I said, 'Me too.'"

## **GOP's Jim Jordan will try again to become House speaker, but his detractors are considering options**

By LISA MASCARO, FARNOUSH AMIRI and STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Having lost the first vote to become House speaker, Rep. Jim Jordan will try again on a decisive second ballot that will test whether the hard-edged ally of Donald Trump can win over the holdouts or if his bid for the gavel is collapsing, denied by detractors.

Ahead of Wednesday morning's voting, Jordan made an unexpected plea for party unity, the combative Judiciary Committee chairman telling his colleagues on social media, "we must stop attacking each other and come together."

But a surprisingly large and politically diverse group of 20 Republicans rejected Jordan's nomination, many resisting the hardball tactics enforcing support, and viewing the Ohio congressman as too extreme for the powerful position of House speaker, second in line to the presidency.

Additional voting Tuesday was postponed as the House hit a standstill, stuck while Jordan worked to shore up backing from Republican colleagues for the job to replace the ousted Kevin McCarthy.

"We're going to keep working," Jordan said late Tuesday at the Capitol.

It's been two weeks of angry Republican infighting since McCarthy's sudden removal by hard-liners, who are now within reach of a central seat of U.S. power. The vote for House speaker, once a formality in Congress, has devolved into another bitter showdown for the gavel.

The tally, with 200 Republicans voting for Jordan and 212 for the Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries of New York, left no candidate with a clear majority, as the 20 Republicans voted for someone else. With Republicans in majority control 221-212, Jordan must pick up most of his GOP foes to win.

Jeffries swiftly intervened, declaring it was time for Republicans to partner with Democrats to reopen the House — in what would be an extraordinary if not unprecedented moment in congressional history.

Bipartisan groups of lawmakers have been floating ways to operate the House by giving greater power to the interim speaker, Rep. Patrick McHenry, R-N.C., or another temporary speaker. The House had never ousted its speaker before McCarthy, and the lawmakers are in rarely tested terrain.

"The Republicans are unable to function right now," said Jeffries. He said talks would "accelerate" between Democrats and Republicans on alternative plans.

Late Tuesday, the novel concept was gaining favor with a pair of surprising high-profile Republicans: Newt Gingrich, the former Republican speaker, said while he likes Jordan, he has "no faith" the nominee can get much beyond the 200 votes he won in the first vote.

"We can't sit around and suck our thumbs and hope the world will wait until the House Republicans get their act together," Gingrich told Fox News' Sean Hannity on his show.

John Boehner, another former GOP speaker, reposted Gingrich's views saying, "I agree," on social media.

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The two men have deep experience with the subject. Both were chased to early retirement by threats of ouster from right-flank insurgents like those who toppled McCarthy.

But with public pressure bearing down on lawmakers from Trump's allies, including Hannity, it's unclear how long the holdouts against Jordan can last. Already, some lawmakers said their first vote was merely a protest, and they would be with Jordan on next rounds.

"Jim Jordan will be a great speaker," the former president said outside a courthouse in Manhattan, where he is facing business fraud charges. "I think he's going to have the votes soon, if not today, over the next day or two."

Flexing their independence, the holdouts are a mix of pragmatists — ranging from seasoned legislators and committee chairs worried about governing, to newer lawmakers from districts where voters back home prefer President Joe Biden to Trump.

Some Republicans resent being pressured by Jordan's allies and say they are being threatened with primary opponents if they don't support him as speaker. Others are simply upset at the way the whole process has dragged out.

As Tuesday's somber roll call was underway, each lawmaker announcing their choice, the holdouts quickly surfaced.

Rep. Don Bacon, R-Neb., a leader of the centrists, voted for McCarthy, the ousted former speaker. Murmurs rippled through the chamber. Others voted for Majority Leader Steve Scalise, who was the party's first nominee to replace McCarthy before he, too, was rejected by hardliners last week.

One, Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart, R-Fla., a veteran appropriator, said later that he would not be "pressured or intimidated" over his vote. "That millisecond when anybody tries to intimidate me is the moment where I no longer have the flexibility."

Another holdout, Republican Rep. Ken Buck of Colorado, said Jordan's role in the runup to the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol and his refusal to admit that Biden, a Democrat, won the 2020 election remained an issue.

Jordan has been a top Trump ally, particularly during the Jan. 6 Capitol attack by the former president's backers who were trying to overturn the 2020 election he lost to Biden. Days later, Trump awarded Jordan a Medal of Freedom.

The political climb has been steep for Jordan, the combative Judiciary Committee chairman and a founding member of the right-flank Freedom Caucus. He is known more as a chaos agent than a skilled legislator, raising questions about how he would lead. Congress faces daunting challenges, risking a federal shutdown at home if it fails to fund the government and fielding Biden's requests for aid to help Ukraine and Israel in the wars abroad.

Immediately after the vote, Jordan conferred with McCarthy, who fared nearly as badly in January, having lost almost as many votes on the first of what would become a historic 15 ballots for the gavel.

First elected in 2006, Jordan has few bills to his name from his time in office. He also faces questions about his past. Some years ago, Jordan denied allegations from former wrestlers during his time as an assistant wrestling coach at Ohio State University who accused him of knowing about claims they were inappropriately groped by an Ohio doctor. Jordan has said he was never aware of any abuse.

## Republicans and Democrats agree that the Afghanistan war wasn't worth it, an AP-NORC poll shows

By LINLEY SANDERS and REBECCA SANTANA Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — At a time when Americans are deeply divided along party lines, a new poll shows considerable agreement on at least one issue: The United States' two-decade-long war in Afghanistan was not worth fighting.

The poll from the Pearson Institute for the Study and Resolution of Global Conflicts and The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research comes two years after the U.S. pulled out of Afghanistan in August 2021 and the Taliban returned to power. The war was started to go after the masterminds of

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the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks and the Taliban who allowed them to use Afghan territory. It ended in frantic scenes of Afghans and Americans desperately trying to get on one of the last flights out of Kabul.

Polls suggest the withdrawal, seen by many as chaotic and ill-planned, may have been a turning point for President Joe Biden's approval ratings, which started a downward slide around that time and have not recovered since.

Two-thirds of Americans say the war in Afghanistan was not worth fighting; 65% of Democrats and 63% of Republicans agree on that evaluation. Many have doubts about how successful the U.S. was at accomplishing more specific goals such as eliminating the threat from extremists or improving opportunities for women.

"It was unwinnable from the beginning," said Martin Stefen, a 78-year-old Republican who lives in Carson City, Nevada. He said the U.S. should have paid closer attention to what happened to the Soviet Union, which waged a decade-long war in Afghanistan during the 1980s only to pull out in defeat in 1989. And, he said, the U.S. should have had a more specific end goal for how it wanted the war in Afghanistan to go and a better understanding of the country's tribal politics.

That thought was echoed by Justin Campbell, a 28-year-old Democrat from Brookhaven, Mississippi. He said it was clear after the U.S. was entrenched in Afghanistan that it didn't have very deep support. Campbell said he's not pleased that the Taliban is back in control.

"But I don't think it was worth us staying over there," he said.

Maliha Chishti, a lecturer and research associate at the Pearson Institute, said she was struck by the fact that after 20 years of war, so many American and Afghan lives lost and billions spent, the vast majority said they felt Afghanistan was not friendly to the U.S. or was an outright enemy. She said the responses demonstrate a frustration on the part of Americans and the need to ask questions about what went wrong with America's attempts to intervene in Afghanistan.

"We invested all of this money to really build a state from scratch and when we left, that state completely collapsed," she said.

Many Americans also say the United States was not successful with many of its key objectives in Afghanistan.

Eliminating the threat from Islamic extremists in Afghanistan during the war is still seen as an important goal by many across party lines: 46% of Democrats and 44% of Republicans called that highly important. But only about one-quarter in each group said this successfully happened during the war.

Slightly fewer than half — 46% — say the U.S. and its allies were successful at the goal of apprehending or killing the individuals in Afghanistan who were responsible for the Sept. 11 attacks, compared with 25% who think the U.S. was unsuccessful in achieving that goal.

Only about one in five Americans say the U.S. successfully improved opportunities for women and girls in Afghanistan, with 43% saying such efforts were unsuccessful. But many said advancing the rights of women and girls in Afghanistan was important to them. About three quarters said that goal was extremely, very or somewhat important to them. Those figures are similar to the level of support for the goal of eliminating the threat of Islamic extremists sheltering in Afghanistan.

Since the Taliban's return to power, they have restricted women's rights to education and work and even barred them from public parks.

Women were more likely than men across party lines to call advancing the rights of women in Afghanistan an important goal. Toni Dewey, a 75-year-old Democrat from Wilmington, North Carolina, said she wasn't sure how much the U.S. could do at this point to improve the rights of women in Afghanistan but she did feel their educational opportunities were greater while America was there.

"I think any population that doesn't respect their population, they're missing out because women do contribute to the benefit of everyone," she said.

Even as Democrats and Republicans have similar views on policy goals for Afghanistan, they differ on whether the U.S. should take a more active role in solving the world's problems: 55% of Republicans say the U.S. should take a less active role, compared with 15% of Democrats. The responses also demonstrate

the ongoing shift in the Republican Party, which has traditionally been more hawkish and interventionist. Nola Sayne, a 59-year-old Republican from Loganville, Georgia, said she is “wary of the United States being the world’s police.” Up until quite recently she had been supportive of policies limiting American involvement abroad — like the war in Ukraine — to instead focus American attention and funding at home. But the Hamas attack on Israel, which took place after the poll was conducted, is making her rethink that position.

“They are our friends, our allies. We can’t let this heinous act go unanswered,” she said.

When it came to general awareness about issues related to the war in Afghanistan, the poll shows 68% of U.S. adults had heard at least some about the U.S. withdrawal; 59% said the same about the Taliban taking control in 2021; and 64% about the Taliban’s restrictions on women.

But fewer had heard about the treatment by the Taliban of Afghan citizens who worked with the United States during the war; 52% had heard a lot or some information while 47% said they had heard little or not a thing.

The U.S. evacuated tens of thousands of Afghans in an August 2021 airlift from Kabul airport. But hundreds of thousands of Afghans — many who worked closely with the U.S. government — are still trying to flee Afghanistan. Groups helping them have warned that Afghans who worked closely with the U.S. military have faced retribution from the Taliban and say the U.S. has a moral responsibility and national security interest in helping them.

Mike Mitchell is executive director of No One Left Behind, which helps Afghans who worked with the U.S. relocate. He said the poll results echo what his organization has noted anecdotally: Many Americans are surprised to learn that so many Afghans who worked with U.S. troops were left behind. He said Americans are inundated with information from crisis after crisis around the world. And he said when people learn about the problems Afghan allies are having, they want to help.

He recently spoke at an event connected to the two-year anniversary of the U.S. withdrawal.

“At the end of the talk, so many people came up and said: ‘I had no idea. ... What can we do about it?’” Mitchell said.

## Illinois boy killed in alleged hate crime remembered as kind, playful as suspect appears in court

By CLAIRE SAVAGE, MELISSA PEREZ WINDER and SOPHIA TAREEN Associated Press

BRIDGEVIEW, Ill. (AP) — A 6-year-old Palestinian American boy who authorities allege was stabbed 26 times by his landlord in response to escalating right-wing rhetoric on the Israel-Hamas war was being remembered as a kind child, while multiple authorities investigate the attack that has become a symbol of larger struggles with hate crime in the U.S.

Crowds of mourners in the heavily Palestinian Chicago suburb of Bridgeview, paid respects Monday as Wadea Al-Fayoume was buried. His mother, who was also critically injured in the attack that led to condemnation from local elected officials to the White House, remained hospitalized.

At a Tuesday evening vigil at a community center, Plainfield Mayor John Argoudelis said he had learned that Wadea liked his Lego toys and playing basketball and soccer and said Wadea sounded like a typical all-American boy.

“We are united,” the mayor said, noting that representatives of many faiths were standing at the front of the gymnasium. “We are first and foremost here to mourn the loss of this young man and to support you, his family.”

Mahmoud Yousef, Wadea’s uncle, spoke to the crowd with the boy’s father standing beside him. Yousef thanked people for coming and said he was touched by the wide variety of people in attendance Tuesday night and for Monday’s funeral service.

“I believe this gathering here is for our children,” he said. “These days, a lot of Muslim communities are keeping their kids home. They’re scared. They’re afraid. But today, everybody came here for their own children, not just Muslim children.”



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During funeral services, family and friends remembered Wadea as an energetic boy who loved playing games. The child, who recently celebrated a birthday, was also seen as another innocent casualty in the escalating war.

"Wadea is a child and he is not the only one under attack," Mosque Foundation Imam Jamal Said said during the janazah, or funeral service. He added "children are being slaughtered literally in the Holy Land, unfortunately, which is very sad."

The boy's body was carried in a small white casket — which was at times draped with a Palestinian flag — through packed crowds.

Yousef remembered Wadea as active, playful and kind. Citing a text message from the boy's mother, Yousef said she recalled the last words her son spoke to her after he was stabbed: "Mom, I'm fine."

"You know what, he is fine," Yousef said. "He's in a better place."

Hours before the boy was buried, 71-year-old Joseph Czuba made his first court appearance on murder, attempted murder and hate crime charges.

The boy's mother told investigators that she rented two rooms on the first floor of the Plainfield home while Czuba and his wife lived on the second floor, Assistant State's Attorney Michael Fitzgerald said in a court filing.

"He was angry at her for what was going on in Jerusalem," Fitzgerald said. "She responded to him, 'Let's pray for peace.' ... Czuba then attacked her with a knife."

The boy's mother fought Czuba off and went into a bathroom where she stayed until police arrived. Wadea, meanwhile, was in his own room, Fitzgerald said.

The mother was identified by family members as Hanaan Shahin, 32, though authorities used a different spelling for her name as well as her son's name.

On the day of the attack, police found Czuba with a cut on his forehead, sitting on the ground outside the home.

Czuba's wife, Mary, told police that her husband feared they would be attacked by people of Middle Eastern descent and had withdrawn \$1,000 from a bank "in case the U.S. grid went down," Fitzgerald said in the court document.

The boy's killing prompted fresh concerns in Muslim circles about Islamophobia and being forgotten in war coverage.

At a news conference before the funeral, speakers called for politicians and media to be responsible with their comments and coverage of the war. Attendees gathered close to hear, phones recording and expressions somber.

In recent days, Jewish and Muslim groups have reported an increase of hateful rhetoric in the wake of the war. Several cities have stepped up police patrols.

The Justice Department said it opened a hate crime investigation into the attack.

"This horrific act of hate has no place in America, and stands against our fundamental values: freedom from fear for how we pray, what we believe, and who we are," President Joe Biden said.

## After blast kills hundreds at Gaza hospital, Hamas and Israel trade blame as rage spreads in region

By NAJIB JOBAIN, SAMYA KULLAB, RAVI NESSMAN and MATTHEW LEE Associated Press  
KHAN YOUNIS, Gaza Strip (AP) — A massive blast rocked a Gaza City hospital packed with wounded and other Palestinians seeking shelter Tuesday, killing hundreds of people, the Hamas-run Health Ministry said. Hamas blamed an Israeli airstrike, while the Israeli military blamed a rocket misfired by other Palestinian militants.

At least 500 people were killed, the ministry said.

As rage spread through the region because of the hospital carnage, and with President Joe Biden heading to the Mideast in hopes of stopping the war from spreading, Jordan's foreign minister said his country canceled a regional summit scheduled for Wednesday in Amman, where Biden was to meet with Jordan's

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King Abdullah II, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi.

The war between Israel and Hamas was "pushing the region to the brink," Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi told state-run television. He said Jordan would host the summit only when everyone had agreed its purpose would be to "stop the war, respect the humanity of the Palestinians and deliver the aid they deserve."

Biden will now visit only Israel, a White House official said.

The explosion at the al-Ahli Hospital left gruesome scenes. Video that The Associated Press confirmed was from the hospital showed fire engulfing the building and the hospital grounds strewn with torn bodies, many of them young children. The grass around them was strewn with blankets, school backpacks and other belongings.

The bloodshed unfolded as the U.S. tried to convince Israel to allow the delivery of supplies to desperate civilians, aid groups and hospitals in the tiny Gaza Strip, which has been under a complete siege since Hamas' deadly rampage in southern Israel last week. Hundreds of thousands of increasingly desperate people were searching for bread and water.

Hamas called Tuesday's hospital blast "a horrific massacre," saying it was caused by an Israeli strike.

The Israeli military blamed Islamic Jihad, a smaller, more radical Palestinian militant group that often works with Hamas. The military said Islamic Jihad militants had fired a barrage of rockets near the hospital and that "intelligence from multiple sources" indicated the group was responsible.

In a briefing with reporters, the chief army spokesman, Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari, said the army determined there were no air force, ground or naval attacks in the area at the time of the blast. He said radar detected outgoing rocket fire at the same moment, and intercepted communications between militant groups indicated that Islamic Jihad fired the rockets.

Hagari also shared aerial footage collected by a military drone that showed a blast that he said was inconsistent with Israeli weaponry. He said the explosion occurred in the building's parking lot, and he noted that the death toll could not be confirmed.

Since the war began, the military said in a statement that roughly 450 rockets fired at Israel by militant groups had landed in Gaza, "endangering and harming the lives of Gazan residents."

Islamic Jihad dismissed those claims, accusing Israel of "trying hard to evade responsibility for the brutal massacre it committed."

The group pointed to Israel's order that Al-Ahli be evacuated and its previous bombing of the hospital complex as proof that the hospital was an Israeli target. It also said the scale of the explosion, the angle of the bomb's fall and the extent of the destruction all pointed to Israel.

Hundreds of Palestinians had taken refuge in al-Ahli and other hospitals in Gaza City in past days, hoping they would be spared bombardment after Israel ordered all residents of the city and surrounding areas to evacuate to the southern Gaza Strip.

Ambulances and private cars rushed some 350 casualties from the al-Ahli blast to Gaza City's main hospital, al-Shifa, which was already overwhelmed with wounded from other strikes, said its director, Mohammed Abu Selmia. The wounded were laid onto bloody floors, screaming in pain.

"We need equipment, we need medicine, we need beds, we need anesthesia, we need everything," Abu Selmia said. He warned that fuel for the hospital's generators would run out within hours.

Before the al-Ahli Hospital deaths, Israeli strikes on Gaza killed at least 2,778 people and wounded 9,700, according to the Gaza Health Ministry, and nearly two-thirds of those killed were children. Another 1,200 people across Gaza are believed to be buried under the rubble, alive or dead, health authorities said.

More than 1,400 people in Israel have been killed, mostly civilians who were slain in Hamas' Oct. 7 attack. The assault also resulted in some 200 being taken captive into Gaza. Hamas militants in Gaza have launched rockets every day since, aiming at cities across Israel.

Hundreds of Palestinians flooded the streets of major West Bank cities including Ramallah, the seat of the Palestinian Authority, where protesters hurled stones at Palestinian security forces who fired back with stun grenades. Others threw stones at Israeli checkpoints, where soldiers killed one Palestinian, West

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Bank authorities said.

Elsewhere, hundreds of people joined protests that erupted in Beirut, Iraq and Amman, where an angry crowd gathered outside the Israeli Embassy.

In Amman, a palace statement said Jordan's king condemned "the ugly massacre perpetrated by Israel against innocent civilians."

The king "warned that this war, which has entered a dangerous phase, will plunge the region into an unspeakable disaster," the statement said.

With tens of thousands of troops massed along the border, Israel has been expected to launch a ground invasion into Gaza, but its plans remained uncertain.

"We are preparing for the next stages of war," military spokesman Lt. Col. Richard Hecht said. "We haven't said what they will be. Everybody's talking about a ground offensive. It might be something different."

Throughout the day Tuesday, airstrikes killed dozens of civilians and at least one senior Hamas figure in the southern half of the Gaza Strip, where the Israeli military told fleeing Palestinians to go. An Associated Press reporter saw around 50 bodies brought to Nasser Hospital after strikes in the southern city of Khan Younis.

The Israeli military said it was targeting Hamas hideouts, infrastructure and command centers.

An airstrike in Deir al Balah reduced a house to rubble, killing a man and 11 women and children inside and in a neighboring house, some of whom had evacuated from Gaza City. Witnesses said there was no warning before the strike.

Shelling from Israeli tanks hit a U.N. school in central Gaza where 4,000 Palestinians had taken refuge, killing six people and wounding dozens, the United Nations Palestinian refugee agency said. At least 24 U.N. installations have been hit the past week, killing at least 14 members of the agency's staff.

A barrage of strikes crashed into the Bureij refugee camp in central Gaza, leveling an entire block of homes and causing dozens of casualties, residents said. Among those killed was one of Hamas' top military commanders, Ayman Nofal, the group's military wing said. He is the highest-profile militant to have been killed in the war.

In Gaza City, Israeli airstrikes also hit the house of Hamas' top political official, Ismail Haniyeh, killing at least 14 people. Haniyeh is based in Doha, Qatar, but his family lives in Gaza City. The Hamas media office did not immediately identify those killed.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu sought to put the blame on Hamas for Israel's retaliatory attacks and the rising civilian casualties in Gaza. "Not only is it targeting and murdering civilians with unprecedented savagery, it's hiding behind civilians," he said.

With Israel barring entry of most water, fuel and food into Gaza since Hamas' brutal attack, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken secured an agreement with Netanyahu to discuss creation of a mechanism for delivering aid to the territory's 2.3 million people. U.S. officials said the gain might appear modest, but stressed that it was a significant step forward.

Still, as of late Tuesday, there was no deal in place. A top Israeli official said his country was demanding guarantees that Hamas militants would not seize any aid deliveries. Tzahi Hanegbi, head of Israel's National Security Council, suggested entry of aid also depended on the return of hostages held by Hamas.

More than 1 million Palestinians have fled their homes — roughly half of Gaza's population — and 60% are now in the approximately 14-kilometer (8-mile) long area south of the evacuation zone, the U.N. said.

At the Rafah crossing, Gaza's only connection to Egypt, truckloads of aid have been waiting to enter for more than a day. The World Food Program said it had more than 300 tons of food ready to cross into Gaza.

## **Biden will stress humanitarian aid, avoiding deeper conflict in Israel but is scrapping Jordan stop**

By COLLEEN LONG, AAMER MADHANI and CHRIS MEGERIAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden's efforts to tamp down tensions in the escalating war between Israel and Hamas faced major setbacks even before he departed for the Middle East on Tuesday,

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as Jordan called off the president's planned summit with Arab leaders after a deadly explosion at a Gaza hospital killed hundreds.

The White House confirmed while Biden was preparing for takeoff from Washington that he now only plans to visit Israel. The Amman summit was scrapped after Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas withdrew in protest of the explosion, which the Hamas-run Health Ministry in Gaza blamed on an Israeli airstrike. The Israeli military said it had no involvement and pinned the blame on a misfired Palestinian rocket.

"This war and this aggression are pushing the region to the brink," Ayman Safadi, Jordan's foreign minister, told al-Mamlaka TV, a state-run network. He said Jordan would only host the summit when all participants agreed on its purpose, which would be to "stop the war, respect the humanity of the Palestinians, and deliver the aid they deserve."

While aboard Air Force One on his way to Israel, Biden released a statement saying he was "outraged and deeply saddened by the explosion at the Al Ahli Arab hospital in Gaza, and the terrible loss of life that resulted."

He said he spoke "immediately" after hearing the news with King Abdullah II of Jordan and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and said he has "directed my national security team to continue gathering information about what exactly happened."

"The United States stands unequivocally for the protection of civilian life during conflict and we mourn the patients, medical staff and other innocents killed or wounded in this tragedy," Biden added.

White House National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said officials haven't yet determined blame, calling the situation "very dynamic, literally changing by the hour" and adding that it "wouldn't be appropriate for us to react to initial reports one way or the other."

"We're not gonna get into the business of reacting in near real-time," Kirby told reporters aboard Air Force One. He said Jordan declared three days of mourning after the hospital explosion and Biden understood the move and was part of a "mutual" decision to call off the Jordan visit.

The cancellation means Biden won't meet with the Jordanian king, Abbas or Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi. But Kirby said he'd have an opportunity to speak to the leaders by phone as he returned to Washington. The quickly shifting events reflect an increasingly volatile situation that will test the limits of American influence in the region.

In Israel, Biden planned to meet with Netanyahu and other Israeli officials, as well as Israeli first responders and the families of victims killed and hostages taken when Hamas made its incursion into Israel.

Biden's decision to put himself in a conflict zone — the same year he made a surprise visit to Ukraine — demonstrates his willingness to take personal and political risks as he becomes heavily invested in another intractable foreign conflict with no clear end game and plenty of opportunity for things to spiral out of control.

The high-stakes presidential trip is emblematic of Biden's belief that the United States should not turn back from its central role on the global stage and his faith that personal diplomacy can play a decisive role.

"This is how Joe Biden believes politics works and history is made," said Jon Alterman, a senior vice president at the Center for Strategic and International Studies who worked on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee while Biden was a member.

There's been no water, fuel or food delivered to Gaza since the brutal Oct. 7 attack by Hamas that killed more than 1,400 Israelis and triggered the unfolding war. Mediators have been struggling to break a deadlock over providing supplies to desperate civilians, aid groups and hospitals.

As the humanitarian crisis grows, so too does the concern of a spiraling conflict that stretches beyond the borders of Gaza. There have already been skirmishes on Israel's northern border with Hezbollah, an Iran-backed group that's based in Southern Lebanon.

"There's a lot that can go wrong on this trip," Alterman said.

Biden's travels will be rife with security concerns, and visits by other U.S. officials have been disrupted by rocket launches into Israel. Additional Israeli airstrikes in Gaza could also prompt more condemnation at a time when Biden is intending to demonstrate solidarity with the United States' closest ally in the region.



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The U.S. has subtly shifted its message over the past week, maintaining full-throated support for Israel while slowly turning up the diplomatic volume on the need for humanitarian assistance in Gaza. Biden and aides have heard increasingly dire predictions about the potential for images of suffering Palestinians to ignite protests and broader unrest throughout the Middle East.

Kirby said Biden will press Israel to ensure that humanitarian aid reaches Gaza as soon as possible and flows continually after that. He said the president would seek to defuse tensions and try to ensure that the war doesn't trigger a deeper conflict.

"He's going to get a sense from the Israelis about the situation on the ground and, more critically, their objectives, their plans, their intentions in the days and weeks ahead," Kirby said of Biden. "And he'll be asking them some tough questions. He'll be asking them as a friend."

He added that the queries wouldn't be "menacing or in any way adversarial."

U.S. officials nonetheless said it has become clear that already limited Arab tolerance of Israel's military operations would evaporate entirely if conditions in Gaza worsened.

Their analysis projected that outright condemnation of Israel by Arab leaders would not only be a boon to Hamas but would likely encourage Iran to step up its anti-Israel activity, adding to fears that a regional conflagration might erupt, according to four officials who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity to discuss internal administration thinking.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, bouncing back and forth between Arab and Israeli leadership ahead of Biden's visit, spent seven and a half hours meeting Monday in Tel Aviv in an effort to broker some kind of aid agreement and emerged with a green light to create a plan on how aid can enter Gaza and be distributed to civilians.

It was on the surface a modest accomplishment, but U.S. officials stressed that it represented a significant change in Israel's position going in — that Gaza would remain cut off from fuel, electricity, water and other essential supplies.

Biden has a long track record of showing public support for Israel while expressing concerns privately to the Israelis about their behavior.

"He believes the only way to get inside the Israelis' heads is to demonstrate profound empathy, but also to be there," Alterman said.

In the U.S., Biden has won rare praise from Republicans over his leadership on Israel, but prospects for providing additional aid are uncertain. The administration has said it would ask for more than \$2 billion in aid for both Israel and Ukraine, though House Republicans remain in disarray.

The Israel-Palestinian conflict has been ongoing for decades, and to a large extent, it's involved the same cadre of men. Netanyahu is the longest-serving prime minister in Israeli history. Abbas has been Palestinian president for nearly 20 years. Abdullah II has been king since 1999 — Biden has called the Jordanian king a loyal ally in a "tough neighborhood." El-Sissi is the newest leader, president since 2014.

With tens of thousands of troops massed along the Israel-Gaza border, Israel has been expected to launch a ground invasion — but plans remain uncertain. Meanwhile, the death toll is mounting. Israeli strikes on Gaza have killed at least 2,700 people and wounded more than 9,700, according to the Gaza Health Ministry. Nearly two-thirds of those killed were children, a ministry official said.

Another 1,200 people across Gaza are believed to be buried under the rubble, alive or dead. More than 1 million Palestinians have fled their homes — roughly half of Gaza's population — and 60% are now in the approximately 8-mile-long (14-kilometer-long) area south of the evacuation zone, according to the United Nations.

## What we know about the deadly blast at a Gaza City hospital

WASHINGTON (AP) — This is what we know about Tuesday's deadly blast at a hospital in Gaza City.

— In the dark of early evening in Gaza, reports emerged of an explosion at Gaza City's al-Ahli hospital. Al-Ahli was crowded both with victims of 10 days of Israeli airstrikes and with families and others who have taken refuge on hospital grounds.

— Video that The Associated Press confirmed as being from the hospital showed an orange ball of fire and flames engulfing the building and grounds.

— The video showed the outside of the hospital, where countless Palestinian families had been camping out. Torn bodies covered the grass, with slain children lying among dead adults.

— Gaza's Hamas-run Health Ministry blamed an Israeli airstrike, and said it killed at least 500 people.

— Israeli authorities soon after denied involvement, saying a misfired Palestinian rocket appeared to blame.

— Outraged over the hospital blast, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and Jordan's King Abdullah II announced they were pulling out of a planned Arab summit Wednesday with President Joe Biden.

— The White House and Jordan's government announced within hours of the attack that Biden's meeting with Arab leaders was off.

— Jordan, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Egypt and other Arab nations condemned the hospital attack, or declared days of national mourning. Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi declared the hospital explosion "a clear violation of international law ... and humanity."

— Protests erupted in some Arab cities. In Beirut, protesters roamed the city on motorcycles and gathered outside the French embassy and a U.N. facility, in protests against the international community's response to the civilian deaths in Gaza. Throngs of Jordanians gathered outside the Israeli Embassy in Amman.

## Remains of at least 189 people removed from Colorado funeral home, up from 115, officials say

By JESSE BEDAYN and MATTHEW BROWN Associated Press

DENVER (AP) — The remains of at least 189 people have been removed from a Colorado funeral home, up from an initial estimate of about 115 when the decaying and improperly stored bodies were discovered two weeks ago, officials said Tuesday.

The remains were found by authorities responding to a report of an "abhorrent smell" inside a decrepit building at the Return to Nature Funeral Home in the small town of Penrose, about 100 miles (160 kilometers) south of Denver. All the remains were removed from the site as of Oct. 13, but officials said the numbers could change again as the identification process continues.

The updated count comes as families who did business with the funeral home grow increasingly concerned about what happened to their deceased loved ones. Local officials said they will begin notifying family members in the coming days as the remains are identified.

There is no timeline to complete the work, which began last week with help from an FBI team that gets deployed to mass casualty events like airline crashes. Fremont County Coroner Randy Keller said he wanted to provide accurate information to families "to prevent further victimization as they continue to grieve."

Officials have not disclosed further details of what was found inside the funeral home, but Fremont Sheriff Allen Cooper described the scene as horrific.

Authorities entered the funeral home's neglected building with a search warrant Oct. 4 and found the decomposing bodies. Neighbors said they had been noticing the smell for days.

The owners of the Return to Nature Funeral Home had missed tax payments in recent months, were evicted from one of their properties and were sued for unpaid bills by a crematory that quit doing business with them almost a year ago, according to public records and interviews with people who worked with them.

A day after the odor was reported, the director of the state office of Funeral Home and Crematory registration spoke on the phone with owner Jon Hallford. He tried to conceal the improper storage of corpses in Penrose, acknowledged having a "problem" at the site and claimed he practiced taxidermy there, according to an order from state officials dated Oct. 5.

Attempts to reach Hallford, his wife Carie and Return to Nature have been unsuccessful. Numerous text messages to the funeral home seeking comment have gone unanswered. No one answered the business phone or returned a voice message left Tuesday.

In the days after the discovery, law enforcement officials said the owners were cooperating as investigators sought to determine any criminal wrongdoing.

The company, which offered cremations and "green" burials without embalming fluids, kept doing business as its financial and legal problems mounted. Green burials are legal in Colorado, but any body not buried within 24 hours must be properly refrigerated.

As of last week, more than 120 families worried their relatives could be among the remains had contacted law enforcement about the case. It could take weeks to identify the remains found and could require taking fingerprints, finding medical or dental records, and DNA testing.

Authorities found the bodies inside a 2,500-square-foot (230-square-meter) building with the appearance and dimensions of a standard one-story home.

Colorado has some of the weakest oversight of funeral homes in the nation with no routine inspections or qualification requirements for funeral home operators.

There's no indication state regulators visited the site or contacted Hallford until more than 10 months after the Penrose funeral home's registration expired. State lawmakers gave regulators the authority to inspect funeral homes without the owners' consent last year, but no additional money was provided for increased inspections.

## **How international law applies to war, and why Hamas and Israel are both alleged to have broken it**

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Hamas and Israel have both been accused of breaking international law during their latest conflict, and the United Nations says it is collecting evidence of war crimes by all sides.

Enforcing the law amid the fog of war is difficult. Holding perpetrators to account once conflicts are over has often proved elusive.

Here is a look at some of the issues.

### **WHAT ARE THE RULES OF WAR?**

The rules of armed conflict are governed by a set of internationally recognized laws and resolutions, including the United Nations charter, which prohibits aggressive wars but allows countries the right to self-defense.

Battlefield behavior has international humanitarian laws including the Geneva Conventions, drawn up after World War II and agreed on by almost every nation.

The four conventions agreed upon in 1949 set out that civilians, the wounded and prisoners must be treated humanely in wartime. They ban murder, torture, hostage-taking and "humiliating and degrading treatment" and require fighters to treat the other side's sick and wounded.

The rules apply both to wars between nations and conflicts, like that between Israel and Hamas, in which one of the parties is not a state.

Another key document in the law of war is the founding Rome Statue of the International Criminal Court, which defines as war crimes acts including intentional attacks on civilians, civilian settlements or humanitarian workers, destroying property where not militarily necessary, sexual violence and unlawful deportation.

Other agreements ban certain types of weapons, such as chemical or biological munitions. Most but not all countries have signed up to these.

### **HAS HAMAS COMMITTED WAR CRIMES?**

Hamas has fired thousands of rockets at Israeli towns and cities, and on Oct. 7 sent hundreds of gunmen across the border from Gaza. They attacked and killed civilians — including children and elderly people -- in their homes and neighborhoods and kidnapped scores of others. Israel says at least 1,400 people died and 199 others were abducted.

Haim Abraham, a lecturer in law at University College London, said the evidence of crimes is clear.

"They massacred civilians at their homes. They kidnaped civilians, taking them hostage. All of these things are clearly war crimes," he said.

Jeanne Sulzer, a lawyer with the Commission for International Justice of Amnesty International France, said the Geneva Conventions state that "civilians should never be taken hostage. If they are, that may be characterized as a war crime."

## HAS ISRAEL'S RESPONSE BEEN LEGAL?

The Israeli military has pounded Hamas-ruled Gaza with airstrikes, blocked deliveries of food, water, fuel and electricity and told people to leave the northern half of the strip ahead of a possible ground invasion. Gaza authorities say 2,800 people have died and 11,000 have been injured during days of bombardment.

Critics accuse Israel of collectively punishing Gaza's 2 million residents.

The Geneva-based International Committee of the Red Cross has said the instruction for hundreds of thousands of people to leave their homes, "coupled with the complete siege explicitly denying them food, water, and electricity, are not compatible with international humanitarian law."

The Israeli army says it follows international law and strikes only legitimate military targets as it seeks to root out militants who embed themselves among the civilian population.

Human Rights Watch has accused Israel of using munitions containing white phosphorus. The incendiary substance is not banned, but its use in densely populated areas has been widely condemned. The Israeli Defense Force has denied using white phosphorus as a weapon in Gaza.

## CAN LAWBREAKERS BE HELD TO ACCOUNT?

A United Nations Commission of Inquiry says it is "collecting and preserving evidence of war crimes committed by all sides" in the current conflict. That evidence could be added to an ongoing investigation by the International Criminal Court into the situation in the Palestinian territories.

The Netherlands-based ICC has the power to prosecute nations' officials for violations and order compensation for victims. But some countries – including the United States, Russia and Israel -- do not recognize the court's jurisdiction, and the ICC does not have a police force to execute arrest warrants.

## ARE THERE ANY OTHER ROUTES?

While the ICC is the only permanent international tribunal set up to prosecute war crimes, other international courts including the International Court of Justice and the European Court of Human Rights can hear cases related to alleged violations. So can domestic courts in Israel or elsewhere. Under U.S. law, American victims could try to bring claims for compensation against Hamas in U.S. courts.

As with Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the prospect of prosecuting war crimes in the current conflict seems remote. But Amnesty International's Sulzer said "legal initiatives are already a reality." She said French national and dual citizen victims of the Hamas attacks have already filed complaints in French courts.

Breaches of international law can also trigger sanctions – such as those imposed on Russia by the United States, the European Union and others over the invasion of Ukraine – and in rare cases draw U.N.-authorized military intervention.

## War between Israel and Hamas raises fears about rising US hostility

By HOLLY RAMER Associated Press

A fatal stabbing in Illinois, a gun pointed at protesters in Pennsylvania, vandalism at synagogues and harassment of staff at a Palestinian restaurant all are raising fears that the war between Israel and Hamas is sparking violence in the United States.

The tensions follow a familiar pattern of crimes against Jewish and Muslim communities rising when conflict erupts in the Middle East and Americans have been killed or taken hostage.

"We have a two pronged threat to American faith communities," said Brian Levin, founding director of the Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism at California State University, San Bernardino.

While it's too soon to say with certainty whether anti-Muslim and anti-Jewish crimes have increased during the war, hate crimes overall increased in the U.S. last year. In its annual report released Monday, the FBI estimated that hate crimes increased by 7% to 11,634 cases in 2022 compared to the previous year. With 1,124 incidents, anti-Jewish attacks were the second most reported hate crime, after anti-Black



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cases. There were 158 reported incidents of anti-Muslim attacks, and 92 reports of anti-Arab cases, according to the report.

Civil rights organizations, however, believe that even before the Hamas attacks in Israel, crime data didn't reflect reality due to a lack of participation by local police departments and internalized fear among the Muslim population, said Robert McCaw, director of governmental affairs for the Council on American-Islamic Relations. In 2021, the Othering & Belonging Institute at the University of California, Berkeley, released a study in which 85% of those who were subjected to Islamophobia said they did not report it to authorities.

"The true number remains to be seen," McCaw said.

In one of the most troubling recent incidents, a landlord in Plainfield, Illinois, is accused of attacking a Palestinian American tenant and her son with a knife on Saturday, purportedly because of their Muslim faith, stabbing the 6-year-old boy to death and injuring the mother. The sheriff, prosecutors and family all said the boy and his mother were targeted for being Muslim. More specifically, prosecutors said the landlord was "angry ... for what was going on in Jerusalem" and his wife told police her husband feared they would be attacked by people of Middle Eastern descent.

In Pennsylvania, a man was charged with felony ethnic intimidation after police said he pointed a gun and yelled slurs at attendees of a pro-Palestinian rally near the state Capitol on Friday. In Boston, the word "Nazi" was spray-painted across the sign for the Palestinian Cultural Center for Peace.

"There's a lot of fear. There's a lot of anxiety and uncertainty in everything that's happening," said Abed Ayoub, national executive director for the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee. He said the group has received more than 100 reports including verbal harassment, threats, intimidation and physical attacks.

"It's very reminiscent of the early days of post-9/11, where people didn't want to go outside, they didn't want to send their kids to school," he said. "They're just worried about being in public and being approached."

In Dearborn, Michigan, which has the nation's highest Muslim population per capita, community and faith leaders met outside the city's police department Monday. The city has seen multiple threats of violence in recent days, including from a man accused of asking on social media if anyone in metro Detroit wanted to "go to Dearborn & hunt Palestinians."

"We have to understand that these issues that are overseas are not just overseas, they are very much also issues here," said Imran Salha, the imam of the Islamic Center of Detroit.

Historically, anti-Jewish hate crimes have increased during violent Israeli-Palestinian conflicts, said Levin, a professor emeritus at California State.

In March 1994, there was a spike in anti-Jewish hate crimes from 79 incidents to 147 a month after an American Israeli extremist opened fire on Palestinian Muslims in a mosque, he said, citing FBI statistics. In October 2000, anti-Jewish hate crimes in the U.S. surged from 81 to 204 compared to the month before after a series of violent protests in Arab villages in northern Israel. Levin observed a similar trend in May 2021, particularly in cities with significant Jewish populations such as New York and Los Angeles.

In California last week, flyers spreading anti-Jewish rhetoric were left in neighborhoods and on vehicles in the city of Orange. And in Fresno, police said a man suspected of breaking windows and leaving an anti-Jewish note at a bakery also is a "person of interest" in the vandalism of a local synagogue.

Julie Platt, chair of the Jewish Federations of North America, said synagogues and Jewish community centers around the country have been strengthening their security programs, but that she does not want to see members of her community duck for cover.

"I think the whole point of this is to terrorize us psychologically," she said. "As long as I hear of no credible threats, I believe we should live our Jewish lives."

Several Palestinian Americans interviewed Friday in a Brooklyn neighborhood with a large Arab population said the atmosphere has been tense in the last week.

Jumana Alkaram said she has not been personally threatened but that: "I know if I was to demonstrate my heritage or the Palestinian flag there would be some type of threat. Because the majority has the support of Israel and don't have the full legit story about what's happening in Gaza."

In New York City, a Palestinian restaurant, Ayat, was forced to disconnect its phone after receiving “nonstop” threatening voicemails, according to co-owner, Abdul Elenani. The storefront features a mural of a crying Palestinian and its menu includes calls to “end the occupation.” On Friday, a man entered the dining room shouting “terrorist” at the people behind the counter, Elenani said.

Still, the hostile reception was overshadowed by the support he has received from his neighbors, many of whom are Jewish and share his views about minimizing civilian deaths, he said.

“In New York, we all live together, we work together, we grow together,” Elenani said. “And we all want this violence to stop.”

## More US ships head toward Israel and 2,000 troops are on heightened alert. A look at US assistance

By TARA COPP and LOLITA C. BALDOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Within hours of the horrific Oct. 7 attack by Hamas, the U.S. began moving warships and aircraft to the region to be ready to provide Israel with whatever it needed to respond. On Tuesday, more ships and forces were heading toward Israel, and other troops in the U.S. were preparing to deploy if called on.

One U.S. aircraft carrier and its strike group are already in the eastern Mediterranean and a second one has left the U.S. and is heading that way. In addition, three Marine warships are moving into the region. Scores of aircraft were dispatched to U.S. military bases around the Middle East, and American special operations forces are working with Israel’s military in planning and intelligence.

As of Tuesday, five shipments of U.S. weapons and equipment had arrived in Israel.

The buildup reflects growing U.S. concern that the deadly fighting between Hamas and Israel will escalate into wider regional conflict. So the key mission for American ships and warplanes is to establish a large and visible presence that will deter Hezbollah, Iran or others from taking advantage of the situation.

A look at what weapons and assistance the U.S. military is providing:

### NAVY SHIPS AND PLANES

One of the most visible examples of the U.S. response is in the waters surrounding Israel — an array of massive warships are in or moving toward the eastern Mediterranean and the Red Sea.

The USS Gerald R. Ford carrier strike group was ordered to go to the Eastern Mediterranean within hours after the attack, and on Tuesday the Pentagon said the ship’s six-month deployment in the region has been extended and gave no end date. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin in recent days ordered the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower carrier strike group to join the Ford in the Eastern Mediterranean, and those ships are now heading across the Atlantic Ocean.

On Tuesday, the Pentagon said it was sending the USS Bataan amphibious ready group, which consists of three ships carrying thousands of Marines from the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit, into the region. A U.S. official said the USS Mesa Verde, an amphibious transport dock, is in the Mediterranean Sea, and the Bataan, an amphibious assault ship, and the USS Carter Hall, a dock landing ship, were in the Gulf region and are now heading toward the Red Sea. The official spoke on condition of anonymity to provide details on ship locations.

The ships carry helicopters and assault craft that can insert Marines into hostile territory or provide medical care or other assistance.

The warships, particularly the aircraft carriers with their fighter jets and surveillance aircraft, have historically proven to be an effective deterrent against Iranian and other militant activity in the Middle East. The carriers serve as command-and-control centers and can conduct information warfare. They carry F-18 fighter jets that can fly deterrence missions or strike targets. And they also have E-2 Hawkeye surveillance planes that can provide early warning on missile launches and detect enemy movements.

### WEAPONS AND SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES

Aircraft loaded with U.S. weapons have already begun arriving in Israel. Austin watched as crew were

unloading one C-17 transport plane on Friday at Nevatim air base east of Gaza. On Tuesday, the Pentagon said five such deliveries have already been made and more are expected.

U.S. defense officials say the administration has already given Israel small diameter bombs, other munition and interceptor missiles for its Iron Dome air defense system, and more will come. The U.S. is also getting defense companies to expedite weapons orders by Israel that were already on the books, including munitions for the Iron Dome.

The Iron Dome munitions the U.S. provides to Israel will likely be in addition to ones Israel had already ordered and will be part of ongoing military assistance packages. The packages will also include JDAM kits — essentially a tail fin and navigation kit that turns a “dumb” bomb into a “smart” bomb that can be guided to a target.

In addition, the U.S. has set up a small cell of special operations forces that has been working with Israel, providing intelligence and planning, as well as advice to the Israeli Defense Forces on hostage recovery efforts. The Pentagon has said those troops are not participating in any hostage rescues and there are no other U.S. military forces on the ground in Israel.

#### AIR FORCE WARPLANES

The Pentagon has also ordered additional warplanes to bolster A-10, F-15 and F-16 squadrons at bases throughout the Middle East. More will be added if needed.

Air Force Secretary Frank Kendall said last week at an Atlantic Council event that the service was ordering units that were about to come home to remain in place along with their replacements.

The U.S. Air Force already has significant airpower in the region to conduct manned and unmanned operations, most notably in Syria, where an Air Force F-16 last week was ordered to shoot down a Turkish drone that was posing a threat to U.S. ground forces.

#### AND MORE TROOPS ARE GETTING READY

Austin ordered about 2,000 U.S. forces to be prepared to deploy if needed in the coming days and weeks. Pentagon spokeswoman Sabrina Singh told reporters Tuesday that the units have not yet been identified. She said the troops would be able to respond quickly, particularly to provide intelligence and surveillance, transportation and medical assistance.

The 2,000 troops are likely to include additional Air Force and Army personnel.

## Prosecutors seeking to recharge Alec Baldwin in fatal shooting on set of Western movie ‘Rust’

By MORGAN LEE Associated Press

SANTA FE, N.M. (AP) — Special prosecutors are seeking to recharge actor Alec Baldwin in the fatal shooting of a cinematographer on the set of a Western movie in 2021, describing Tuesday their preparations to present new information to a grand jury.

New Mexico-based prosecutors Kari Morrissey and Jason Lewis said they’ll present their case to the grand jury within the next two months, noting “additional facts” have come to light in the shooting on the set of the film “Rust” that killed Halyna Hutchins.

Baldwin, a coproducer of the film, was pointing a gun at Hutchins during a rehearsal inside a rustic chapel on a movie-set ranch near Santa Fe when the gun went off on Oct. 21, 2021, killing the cinematographer and wounding director Joel Souza.

“After extensive investigation over the past several months, additional facts have come to light that we believe show Mr. Baldwin has criminal culpability in the death of Halyna Hutchins and the shooting of Joel Souza,” Morrissey and Lewis said in an email. “We believe the appropriate course of action is to permit a panel of New Mexico citizens to determine from here whether Mr. Baldwin should be held over for criminal trial.”

They declined to elaborate on the additional information they may present to the grand jury.

Baldwin has said he pulled back the hammer — but not the trigger — and the gun fired.

Attorneys for Baldwin said the latest move by prosecutors is misguided.

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"It is unfortunate that a terrible tragedy has been turned into this misguided prosecution. We will answer any charges in court," Luke Nikas and Alex Spiro said in an email.

Special prosecutors initially dismissed an involuntary manslaughter charge against Baldwin in April, saying they were informed the gun might have been modified before the shooting and malfunctioned. They later pivoted and began weighing whether to refile a charge against Baldwin after receiving a new analysis of the gun.

The recent gun analysis from experts in ballistics and forensic testing based in Arizona and New Mexico relied on replacement parts to reassemble the gun fired by Baldwin — after parts of the pistol were broken during earlier testing by the FBI. The report examined the gun and markings it left on a spent cartridge to conclude that the trigger had to have been pulled or depressed.

The analysis led by Lucien Haag of Forensic Science Services in Arizona stated that although Baldwin repeatedly denies pulling the trigger, "given the tests, findings and observations reported here, the trigger had to be pulled or depressed sufficiently to release the fully cocked or retracted hammer of the evidence revolver."

An earlier FBI report on the agency's analysis of the gun found that, as is common with firearms of that design, it could go off without pulling the trigger if force was applied to an uncocked hammer — such as by dropping the weapon.

The only way the testers could get it to fire was by striking the gun with a mallet while the hammer was down and resting on the cartridge, or by pulling the trigger while it was fully cocked. The gun eventually broke during testing.

Authorities have not specified exactly how live ammunition found its way on set and into the .45-caliber revolver made by an Italian company that specializes in 19th century reproductions.

The weapons supervisor on the movie set, Hannah Gutierrez-Reed, has pleaded not guilty to involuntary manslaughter and evidence tampering in the case. Her trial is scheduled to begin in February.

In March, "Rust" assistant director and safety coordinator David Halls pleaded no contest to unsafe handling of a firearm and received a suspended sentence of six months of probation. He agreed to cooperate in the investigation of the shooting.

In the revived case against Baldwin, first reported by NBC News, a grand jury would "determine whether probable cause exists to bind Baldwin over on criminal charges," special prosecutors said.

Neema Rahmani, a former federal prosecutor who provides legal commentary as head of West Coast Trial Lawyers in Los Angeles, said prosecutors reserved the right to reopen the case by dismissing charges "without prejudice," and that he'd be surprised if a grand jury didn't return an indictment.

Unlike a jury trial in which guilt must be proved "beyond a reasonable doubt," the standard on possible charges before a grand jury is a lower "probable cause" finding, Rahmani said.

"It's just a one-sided presentation by prosecutors," he said.

The 2021 shooting resulted in a series of civil lawsuits centered on accusations that the defendants were lax with safety standards. The cases have included wrongful death claims filed by members of Hutchins' family. Baldwin and other defendants have disputed the accusations that they were lax with safety standards.

The company Rust Movie Productions has paid a \$100,000 fine to state workplace safety regulators following a scathing narrative of safety failures in violation of standard industry protocols, including testimony that production managers took limited or no action to address two misfires on set before the fatal shooting.

The filming of "Rust" resumed this year in Montana, under an agreement with the cinematographer's widower, Matthew Hutchins, that made him an executive producer.

## Republicans reject Rep. Jim Jordan for House speaker on a first ballot, signaling more turmoil ahead

By LISA MASCARO, FARNOUSH AMIRI and STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Signaling more turmoil ahead, Republicans rejected Rep. Jim Jordan for House



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speaker on a first ballot Tuesday, as a surprising 20 holdouts denied the hard-charging ally of Donald Trump the GOP majority needed to seize the gavel.

Additional voting was postponed as the House hit a standstill, stuck while Jordan works to shore up support from Republican colleagues to replace the ousted Kevin McCarthy for the job. Reluctant Republicans are refusing to give Jordan their votes, viewing the Ohio congressman as too extreme for the powerful position of House speaker, second in line to the presidency. Next votes were expected Wednesday.

"We're going to keep working," Jordan said at the Capitol as evening fell.

It's been two weeks of angry Republican infighting since McCarthy's sudden removal by hard-liners, who are now within reach of a central seat of U.S. power. The vote for House speaker, once a formality in Congress, has devolved into another bitter showdown for the gavel.

Jordan said after the first vote that he was not surprised and expected to do better in the next round. But the afternoon dragged on with no further votes Tuesday. "We feel confident," he said, ducking into a leadership office.

The tally, with 200 Republicans voting for Jordan and 212 for the Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries of New York, left no candidate with a clear majority, as 20 Republicans voted for someone else. With Republicans in majority control, Jordan must pick up most of his GOP foes to win.

The holdouts are a mix of pragmatists, ranging from seasoned legislators and committee chairs worried about governing, to newer lawmakers from districts where voters back home prefer President Joe Biden to Trump.

But with public pressure bearing down on lawmakers from Trump's allies, including Fox News Channel's Sean Hannity, it's unclear how long the holdouts can last. Jordan swiftly flipped dozens of detractors in a matter of days, shoring up Republicans who have few options left, but it was not enough.

"Jim Jordan will be a great speaker," the former president said outside a courthouse in Manhattan, where he is facing business fraud charges. "I think he's going to have the votes soon, if not today, over the next day or two."

The political climb has been steep for Jordan, the combative Judiciary Committee chairman and a founding member of the right-flank Freedom Caucus. He is known more as a chaos agent than a skilled legislator, raising questions about how he would lead. Congress faces daunting challenges, risking a federal shutdown at home if it fails to fund the government and fielding Biden's requests for aid to help Ukraine and Israel in the wars abroad.

With the House Republican majority narrowly held at 221-212, Jordan can afford to lose only a few votes to reach the 217 majority threshold, if there are no further absences.

Jeffries swiftly intervened, declaring was time for Republicans to partner with Democrats to reopen the House.

Bipartisan groups of lawmakers have been floating ways to operate the House by giving greater power to the interim speaker, Rep. Patrick McHenry, R-N.C., or another temporary speaker.

"The Republicans are unable to function right now," said Jeffries. He said talks "would accelerate" between Democrats and Republicans into the evening.

As the somber roll call was underway, each lawmaker announcing their choice, the holdouts quickly surfaced.

Rep. Don Bacon, R-Neb., a leader of the centrists, voted for McCarthy, the ousted former speaker. Murmurs rippled through the chamber. Others voted for Majority Leader Steve Scalise, who was the party's first nominee to replace McCarthy before he, too, was rejected by hardliners last week.

Making the official nominating speech was another top Trump ally, GOP conference chairwoman Rep. Elise Stefanik of New York, who declared Jordan will be "we the people's speaker."

On the other side of the aisle, Democratic caucus chairman Rep. Pete Aguilar of California nominated Jeffries and warned that handing the speaker's gavel to a "vocal election denier" would send "a terrible message" at home and abroad.

Aguilar recited all the times Jordan voted against various measures -- abortion access, government aid and others. Democrats chanted, "He said no!"

Upset that a small band of hard-liners have upended the House by ousting McCarthy, Republicans have watched their majority control of the chamber descend into public infighting. All House business has ground to a halt.

One holdout, Republican Rep. Ken Buck of Colorado, said Jordan's role in the runup to the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol and his refusal to admit that Biden, a Democrat, won the 2020 election remained an issue.

"Jim, at some point, if he's going to lead this conference during the presidential election cycle and particularly in a presidential election year ... is going to have to be strong and say Donald Trump didn't win the election and we need to move forward," Buck said.

Immediately after the vote, Jordan conferred with McCarthy, who fared nearly as badly in January, having lost almost as many votes on the first of what would become a historic 15 ballots for the gavel.

Jordan can rely on Trump's support as well as pressure on colleagues from an army of grassroots activists who recognize him from cable news and fiery performances at committee hearings. Some Republicans said their first vote was merely a protest, and they would be with Jordan on future ballots.

Rep. Matt Gaetz, R-Fla., who engineered McCarthy's ouster by a handful of hard-liners, which did not include Jordan, publicly praised each lawmaker who has flipped to Jordan's column — and berated those who have not.

Democrats have decried the far-right shift, calling Jordan the leader of the chaos wing of the GOP.

Jordan has been a top Trump ally, particularly during the Jan. 6 Capitol attack by the former president's backers who were trying to overturn the 2020 election he lost to Biden. Days later, Trump awarded Jordan a Medal of Freedom.

Now the Republican Party's front-runner to challenge Biden in the 2024 election, Trump backed Jordan to replace McCarthy early on and worked against the nomination of Scalise, who withdrew after colleagues rejected their own rules and failed to coalesce around him.

Tensions remained high among Republicans exhausted by the internal party infighting.

Some Republicans resent being pressured by Jordan's allies and say they are being threatened with primary opponents if they don't support him as speaker. Others are simply upset at the way the whole process has dragged out.

First elected in 2006, Jordan has few bills to his name from his time in office. He also faces questions about his past. Some years ago, Jordan denied allegations from former wrestlers during his time as an assistant wrestling coach at Ohio State University who accused him of knowing about claims they were inappropriately groped by an Ohio doctor. Jordan has said he was never aware of any abuse.

## **Broken rail caused fatal Colorado train derailment that collapsed bridge, early findings show**

By MATTHEW BROWN and AMY BETH HANSON Associated Press

A broken rail caused a train derailment that collapsed a bridge over an interstate highway in Colorado, killing a truck driver and blocking the road for days, federal authorities said Tuesday based on their preliminary findings.

Investigators are examining how the rail broke and why warning systems did not alert crews to the condition of the track, the National Transportation Safety Board said. An agency spokesperson said officials had no reason to believe sabotage caused the derailment.

Built in 1958, the steel bridge collapsed Sunday when 30 cars from a BNSF Railway train hauling coal derailed while crossing over Interstate 25. The main north-south highway through Colorado is expected to remain closed for several more days, and hundreds of tons of coal and mangled railcars should be cleared from the road by Wednesday afternoon, officials said. After that, crews will assess the damage.

The driver of a semitrailer truck who was killed while passing under the bridge was identified as Lafollette Henderson, 60, of Compton, California. He is survived by six children and 15 grandchildren, said his daughter, Endaya Jenel.

Every week, she said, Henderson would mail a toy car to Jenel's 16-month old son from around the country. Some of the mailings haven't been opened and she plans to save them until her son is older. She had a baby last week who the grandfather never met.

"I'll never get another call from him while he's on the road! Talking for hours on the phone at 5am. My heart is broken in more ways than one!" Jenel wrote in a social media post.

Broken rails and other track problems are a leading cause of derailments, according to federal accident data.

The NTSB has long recommended that railroads install more automatic monitoring systems that can detect problems with tracks early on and prevent accidents. The agency repeated its call for those systems in July in response to a fatal Amtrak derailment along BNSF-owned tracks in northern Montana two years ago.

It was not immediately known whether the track where Sunday's derailment occurred had such a system. NTSB spokesperson Sarah Taylor Sulick said that was part of the investigation.

"They will be pulling maintenance records. They'll be interviewing people involved. They'll be talking to the railroad. They'll be talking to the state," Sulick said.

BNSF has not said when it last conducted an inspection and did not immediately respond to emailed questions or requests to view its inspection records.

Former NTSB investigator Russell Quimby said an automatic warning system likely was in place in Colorado because the accident happened along one of the railway's main routes between Denver and Texas, where BNSF is headquartered and which has numerous coal-burning power plants.

Those warning systems are integrated into the track and built so that if a rail breaks, they would stop any approaching trains, Quimby said. However, if the rail broke as the train was traveling over it, there would be little the engineer on board could do, since it can take over a mile to stop a fully loaded freight train, he said.

"The most stress you're going to have on that rail is when something's sitting on it. A fully loaded rail car, it's putting over 15 tons of pressure on the track per wheel," he said.

Railroads regularly inspect their tracks, looking for cracks or other defects in the rails that could make them more susceptible to breaking. Repairs are scheduled based on the severity of the defect, so even if a problem had been identified, it might not have been fixed immediately.

A nine-mile (14-kilometer) stretch of I-25 — used by 39,000 to 44,000 vehicles daily — was shut down. Traffic was being detoured around the derailment site and through the town of Penrose, almost 30 miles (48 kilometers) miles west of Pueblo.

Pressure for the railroad industry to improve safety has grown since a February derailment of a train hauling toxic chemicals that triggered evacuations in Ohio and Pennsylvania. There were more than 12,400 train derailments in the U.S. in the past decade, or more than 1,200 annually, according to Federal Railroad Administration data based on reports submitted by railroads.

At least 111 railroad accidents have been caused by bridge failures or bridge misalignments since 1976, according to an Associated Press review of derailment reports submitted by railroads to the Federal Railroad Administration. That's just over two accidents annually on average.

Sunday's accident follows a railroad bridge collapse in June along a Montana Rail Link route that sent railcars with oil products plunging into the Yellowstone River, spilling molten sulfur and up to 250 tons (226.7 metric tons) of hot asphalt. The accident remains under investigation.

## **Former AP videojournalist Yaniv Zohar killed in Hamas attack at home with his family**

By ARON HELLER Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — Yaniv Zohar, a former Associated Press videojournalist and beloved colleague who covered conflicts and major news in his native country for three decades, was killed in his home during Hamas' bloody cross-border rampage on Oct. 7 along with his wife and two daughters. He was 54.

Zohar worked for the AP's Israel bureau for 15 years, from 2005 to 2020, covering all the major news

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events in the country. But his area of expertise was the intermittent warfare on the doorstep of his home in the Nahal Oz kibbutz near the border with the Gaza Strip.

Zohar was often the first to alert the news desk of violence nearby and the first to arrive on the scene.

Most notably, he was deeply involved in coverage of the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza in 2005 and was the first newscaster on the scene of the abduction of Israeli soldier Gilad Schalit by Palestinian militants the following year.

"Yaniv was AP's eyes and ears in southern Israel, always among the first to respond to news in the busy region," AP Executive Editor Julie Pace said. "He was a part of the community where he worked, giving him insights that were invaluable to his colleagues. When tensions rose in the Middle East, colleagues would quickly ask, 'What does Yaniv say?'"

In recent years, Zohar worked as a photographer for the Israel Hayom daily newspaper.

"He was a wonderful friend, a devoted father, a man with heart and generosity," the paper eulogized him in a statement. "He would always run after the next frame despite the difficult sights he was photographing."

He found his death in perhaps the most devastating sight of them all, as at least 2,000 Hamas militants infiltrated from Gaza and in gruesome fashion killed more than 1,400 Israelis in the deadliest attack in the country's 75-year history.

Zohar and his family were on the frontline of the massacre in their border kibbutz. He was killed along with his wife, Yasmin, 49, and his two daughters, Tehelet, 20, and Keshet, 18. Zohar's 13-year-old son Ariel, who had gone for an early-morning jog, escaped alive.

Yasmin's father, Haim Livne, was also killed in the attack.

Zohar was a gentle giant, standing over 1.9 meters tall (6 feet, 3 inches). Yet his many friends described him as modest, calm, quiet and generous. Though fiercely competitive, he was beloved by his fellow journalists who covered the region, and his home near the Gaza border became a base for other reporters arriving to report breaking news.

"His heart was as big as his body," said photographer Yehuda Peretz, his close friend.

An estimated 1,000 people attended Zohar's funeral Tuesday in central Israel, where the service was interrupted four times by air-raid sirens and incoming rocket fire from Gaza. Israel's Iron Dome defense system could be seen interrupting rockets in the sky above.

According to Jewish tradition, burials take place as soon as possible. But it took 10 days before Zohar and his family could be laid to rest because of a backlog due to the sheer numbers of victims and because of the lengthy DNA process required to identify all the bodies.

Zohar's sister Sivan said the repeated air-raid sirens prevented mourners from completing their eulogies.

"They won't even let us bury our dead," she said, her voice shaking. "They broke into their home and murdered all these good, innocent people in cold blood."

For her father, an 89-year-old Holocaust survivor, she said the experience was like a "second Holocaust."

She said Zohar's son would be raised by her sister and that the family planned to go ahead with his bar mitzvah ceremony in a month. "We will continue to celebrate life, and we won't let anyone destroy us. This is how we will avenge their deaths," she said.

Sivan described her brother as a devoted journalist whose images of the region reached across the world, and as a man of peace who believed in coexistence.

Veteran AP videojournalist Alon Bernstein recalled his many visits to Zohar's home, and how they liked to share a bottle of Jack Daniels together.

"Yaniv was a good friend and a real pro. We worked together overseas and all over the country, covering violence wherever it erupted," Bernstein said. "I have witnessed many atrocities in my long time as a news cameraman. None of them were as horrible as what happened to Yaniv and his family. It is too terrible for words."

**Breast cancer is deadlier for Black women. A study of**



## mammograms could help close the gap

By CARLA K. JOHNSON AP Medical Writer

Are 3D mammograms better than standard 2D imaging for catching advanced cancers?

A clinical trial is recruiting thousands of volunteers — including a large number of Black women who face disparities in breast cancer death rates — to try to find out.

People like Carole Stovall, a psychologist in Washington, D.C., have signed up for the study to help answer the question.

“We all need a mammogram anyway, so why not do it with a study that allows the scientists to understand more and move closer to finding better treatments and ways of maybe even preventing it?” Stovall said.

The underrepresentation of women and minorities in research is a long-simmering issue affecting health problems including Alzheimer’s disease, stroke and COVID-19. Trials without diversity lead to gaps in understanding of how new treatments work for all people.

“Until we get more Black women into clinical trials, we can’t change the science. And we need better science for Black bodies,” said Ricki Fairley, a breast cancer survivor and advocate who is working on the issue.

Black women are 40% more likely to die from breast cancer than white women and tend to be diagnosed younger. But it’s not clear whether 3D mammography is better for them, said Dr. Wortia McCaskill-Stevens of the National Cancer Institute.

“Are there populations for whom this might be important to have early diagnosis?” asked McCaskill-Stevens. “Or is it harmful,” causing too many false alarms or unneeded follow-up tests and treatments?

McCaskill-Stevens, who is Black, leads NCI’s efforts to boost access to cancer research in minority and rural communities. She has joined the study herself.

The newer 3D technique has been around for a decade, but there’s never been conclusive evidence that it’s better than 2D at detecting advanced cancers. The screening technique combines multiple pictures of the breast taken from different angles to create a 3D-like image. Both 3D and 2D mammograms compress the breast and use low doses of radiation.

Prior studies suggest that 3D finds more cancers than 2D, but catching more cancers doesn’t necessarily mean more lives saved. Some cancers missed by standard screening may not progress or need treatment. Previous studies did not randomly assign patients to a screening method, the gold standard for research.

The notion “that if it’s new, it’s shiny, then it’s better,” isn’t necessarily true, McCaskill-Stevens said. “Until we have the evidence to support that, then we need well-designed randomized trials.”

The trial has enrolled nearly 93,000 women so far with a goal of 128,000. The NCI-funded study is now running in Canada, South Korea, Peru, Argentina, Italy and 32 U.S. states. A site in Thailand will soon begin enrolling patients.

“We added more international sites to enhance the trial’s diversity, particularly for Hispanic and Asian women,” said Dr. Etta Pisano, who leads the study.

Overall, 42% of participants are Hispanic. As recruiting continues, enrolling Black women and other women of color will “absolutely” continue as a priority, Pisano said.

Participants are randomly assigned to either 2D or 3D mammograms and are followed for several years. The number of advanced cancers detected by the two methods will be compared.

At the U.S. study sites, 21% of study participants are Black women — that’s higher than a typical cancer treatment study, in which 9% of participants are Black, McCaskill-Stevens said.

The University of North Carolina has signed up more Black women than any other study site. Nearly a quarter of the nearly 3,000 women enrolled at UNC’s two locations are Black.

“Women in North Carolina want to take part in something that’s bigger than them,” said Dr. Cherie Kuzmiak, who leads the UNC arm of the study. “They want this active role in helping determine the future of health care for women.”

In Washington, D.C., word of mouth has led to successful recruiting.

A chance encounter at her hair salon persuaded Stovall to join the research. While waiting for a hair appointment, she met Georgetown University cancer researcher Lucile Adams-Campbell. The two, both

Black, started chatting.

"She explained how important it was to get women of color into the program," said Stovall, who jumped at the chance to catch up on her mammograms after the COVID-19 pandemic delayed screening for her and thousands of others.

For Stovall, there was a personal reason to join the research. Her sister recently completed treatment for triple negative breast cancer, an aggressive type that affects Black women at higher rates than white women.

Women ages 45 to 74 without a personal history of breast cancer are eligible for the study, which launched in 2017. Many women also are providing blood and cheek swab samples for a database that will be mined for insights.

"It's a dream that people had since the beginning of screening that we wouldn't fit everybody into the same box," Pisano said. The study's findings could "reduce disparities if we're successful, assuming people have access to care."

Stovall, 72, had a brief scare when her mammogram, the traditional 2D type, showed something suspicious. A biopsy ruled out cancer.

"I was extremely relieved," Stovall said. "Everybody I know has heard from me about the need for them to go get a mammogram."

## Trump returns to his civil fraud trial, hears an employee and an appraiser testify against him

By MICHAEL R. SISAK and JENNIFER PELTZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Donald Trump returned Tuesday to the civil fraud trial that imperils his real estate empire, watching and deploring the case as an employee and an outside appraiser testified that his company essentially put a thumb on the scale when sizing up his properties' value.

Incensed by a case that disputes his net worth and could strip him of such signature holdings as Trump Tower, the former president is due to testify later in the trial. But he chose to attend the first three days and came back Tuesday to observe — and to protest his treatment to the news cameras waiting outside the Manhattan courtroom.

Star witness Michael Cohen, a onetime Trump fixer now turned foe, postponed his scheduled testimony because of a health problem.

Instead, Trump company accountant Donna Kidder testified that she was told to make some assumptions favorable to the firm on internal financial spreadsheets. Outside appraiser Doug Larson said he didn't suggest or condone a former Trump Organization comptroller's methods of valuing properties.

"It doesn't make sense," Larson said of the way the ex-controller reached a \$287.6 million value for a prominent Trump-owned retail space in 2013.

Trump, outside court, reiterated his insistence that he's done nothing wrong and that New York Attorney General Letitia James' lawsuit is a political vendetta designed to drag down his 2024 presidential campaign as he leads the Republican field.

"We built a great company — a lot of cash, it's got a lot of great assets, some of the greatest real estate assets anywhere in the world," Trump said outside the courtroom. He dismissed the case as "a disgrace," the legal system as "corrupt" and the Democratic attorney general as a "radical lunatic."

James' lawsuit alleges that Trump and his company deceived banks, insurers and others by massively overvaluing his assets and inflating his net worth on his financial statements.

"Mr. Trump may lie, but numbers don't lie," she said after court.

"He can call me names, he can engage in distractions," she said, but "his entire empire was built on nothing but lies and on sinking sand."

Trump says his assets were actually undervalued and maintains that disclaimers on his financial statements amounted to telling banks and other recipients to check out his numbers themselves.

Larson, a real estate brokerage executive and certified appraiser, assessed Trump properties for lenders.

He was taken aback when told on the stand that he was repeatedly cited as an outside expert in former Trump Organization controller Jeffrey McConney's valuation spreadsheets.

"It's inappropriate and inaccurate," Larson testified. "I should have been told, and an appraisal should have been ordered."

When it came to valuing a storefront formerly known as Niketown, McConney relied on rates of return for a different type of property, rather than for comparable retail space, Larson testified. He also said he appraised a Trump-owned Wall Street building at \$540 million in 2015, while McConney valued it at \$735.4 million on Trump's financial statement.

In cross-examining Larson, Trump lawyer Lazaro Fields asked whether anything "prevents President Trump, as a real estate developer, from valuing his own properties."

"I don't know. I wouldn't know," Larson responded. Asked again, Larson said: "Not that I know of."

Kidder, the Trump company accountant, testified that as she filled out spreadsheets documenting the value of a Trump-owned Wall Street office building, then-finance chief Allen Weisselberg told her to act as if the skyscraper would be fully leased by a certain date, even if some space was currently vacant. For a Park Avenue residential tower, she was told to project that unsold units "would all sell out" in a certain timeframe.

Kidder said she wasn't aware that those assumptions would be used to improve Trump's bottom line on financial statements that helped his company make deals and get financing and insurance.

Trump lawyer Christopher Kise objected to what he deemed "very granular" testimony from Kidder, who also alluded to a prior Trump tangle with New York state's lawyers.

In explaining a spreadsheet, she noted an entry about a \$12 million loan to pay a \$25 million settlement of lawsuits from former state Attorney General Eric Schneiderman and others over the now-defunct Trump University real estate seminar program.

Judge Arthur Engoron is hearing the current case without a jury. The suit was brought under a state law that doesn't allow for one.

Trump has repeatedly criticized both the statute and the judge, a Democrat. The ex-president said Tuesday that he had come to like and respect Engoron but believed that Democrats were "pushing him around like a pinball."

After Trump maligned a key court staffer on social media during the trial's first days, the judge ordered him to delete the post and issued a limited gag order, warning participants in the case not to smear members of his staff.

In a pretrial decision last month, Engoron resolved the case's top claim, ruling that Trump and his company committed years of fraud by exaggerating his asset values and net worth on his financial statements.

As punishment, Engoron ordered that a court-appointed receiver take control of some Trump companies, putting the future oversight of Trump Tower and other marquee properties in question. An appeals court has since blocked enforcement of that aspect of the ruling for now.

The trial concerns the suit's remaining claims of conspiracy, insurance fraud and falsifying business records.

## **Congressional draft report in Brazil recommends charges for Bolsonaro over Jan. 8 insurrection**

By DIANE JEANTET Associated Press

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) — A draft congressional report on Brazil's Jan. 8 riots on Tuesday accused ex-President Jair Bolsonaro of being the insurrection's mastermind and recommended he be criminally charged with attempting to stage a coup.

The report by Sen. Eliziane Gama followed months of hearings by a committee investigating the uprising in Brasilia. It proposed charges against Bolsonaro including the violent overthrow of democratic rule, and a slew of other charges against dozens of people citing "extensive documentation," including bank statements, phone records and messages.

Bolsonaro, who lost his reelection bid last fall, has denied any involvement in the rioting, which took

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place after he had quietly left the country to stay in Florida while refusing to attend the inauguration of incoming President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva.

A full panel of 32 lawmakers — most of whom are allied with Lula — are scheduled to vote on the inquiry report Wednesday and are seen as likely to adopt the measure, which would serve as a recommendation to prosecutors.

On Jan. 8, one week after Lula took office, thousands of Bolsonaro supporters stormed Congress, the Supreme Court and presidential palace, refusing to accept his election defeat. They bypassed security barricades, climbed on roofs, smashed windows and invaded the public buildings.

Many observers at the time speculated that the riot was a coordinated effort to oust Lula from office, and could not have occurred without the complicity of some of the military and police. Gama's report jibes with those claims, and goes a step further in naming Bolsonaro as the ringleader.

"Jair Bolsonaro and everyone around him knew about this," Gama said as she read out her 1,100 page-long report in Senate. "They understood the violence and the scope of the demonstrations. They frequented the same groups on social media. They encouraged and fed rebellion and dissatisfaction. They deliberately added more fuel to the fire they themselves had lit."

Bolsonaro had long stoked belief among his hardcore supporters that the nation's electronic voting system was prone to fraud, though he never presented any evidence.

In one of the inquiry's most-watched hearings, a Brazilian hacker claimed that Bolsonaro, then still in power, had asked him to infiltrate the country's electronic voting system to expose its alleged weaknesses ahead of the Oct. 30, 2022 presidential election. Bolsonaro acknowledged he and the hacker spoke, but denies the allegation that he requested the hack.

Bolsonaro "not only instrumentalized public bodies, institutions and agents, but also exploited the vulnerability and hope of thousands of people," the draft read.

The committee, which began working in May, collected statements from 20 people and received more than 900 documents from investigative bodies, according to newspaper O Estado de S. Paulo.

Aside from Bolsonaro, Gama's list of proposed indictments also targets dozens of others. They include Gen. Braga Netto, who served as Bolsonaro's Defense Minister and then was his running mate. Also on the list are Anderson Torres, ex-Justice minister and secretary of public security in Brasilia; former institutional security minister Gen. Augusto Heleno; former Chief of Staff Gen. Luiz Eduardo Ramos; the head of Brazil's Defense, Navy and Armed forces.

Federal police separately have already been investigating Bolsonaro's possible role in inciting the Jan. 8 uprising.

The conservative firebrand lost his re-election bid to Lula, his leftist political nemesis, who garnered 50.9% of the votes. It was the narrowest presidential election result since Brazil's 1985 return to democracy after two decades of military rule.

Afterward, he shrank from the spotlight. He first remained holed up in the presidential residence then, on the eve of Lula's inauguration, set out for Orlando, Florida and stayed there for months. His party had scored more seats in Congress than any other, but its would-be leader was virtually silent. And Bolsonaro was soon targeted by other investigations.

Federal police in August alleged Bolsonaro received cash from the nearly \$70,000 sale of two luxury watches he received as gifts from Saudi Arabia while in office. Officers raided the homes and offices of several people purportedly involved in the case, including a four-star army general.

Bolsonaro has denied any wrongdoing involving the gifts.

He was also barred in June from running for office until 2030 after a panel of judges concluded that he abused his power and cast unfounded doubts on the country's voting system.

In 2021, a Senate-led inquiry report urged that Bolsonaro be charged with crimes against humanity for allegedly bungling the country's response to COVID-19 and contributing to Brazil having the world's second-highest pandemic death toll. No charges have been brought along those lines.



## **Biden didn't make Israeli-Palestinian talks a priority. Arab leaders say region now paying the price**

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — From its first months in office, the Biden administration made a distinctive decision on its Middle East policy: It would deprioritize a half-century of high-profile efforts by past U.S. presidents, particularly Democratic ones, to broker a broad and lasting peace deal between Israel and the Palestinians.

Since Richard Nixon, successive U.S. administrations have tried their hands at Camp David summits, shuttle diplomacy and other big-picture tries at coaxing Israeli and Palestinian leaders into talks to settle the disputes that underlie 75 years of Middle East tensions. More than other recent presidents, Joe Biden notably has not.

Instead, administration officials early on sketched out what they called Biden's policy of quiet diplomacy. They advocated for more modest improvements in Palestinian freedoms and living conditions under Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's hardline government, which has encouraged settlement in the Israeli-occupied West Bank and includes coalition partners that oppose the U.S.-backed two-state solution. The less ambitious approach fit with Biden's determination to pivot his foreign-policy focus from Middle East hotspots to China.

But the long-term risks of sidelining the Israeli-Palestinian conflict exploded back into view with the Hamas attack on Israel on Oct. 7 and Israel's heavy bombardment of Gaza in response. The United States' angry Arab partners are pointing to America's failure to actively engage as Israeli-Palestinian violence roars back to center stage.

Hamas militants' bloody breakout from Gaza and Israel's military escalating response have killed thousands of civilians in Israel and Gaza, prompted Biden to deploy carrier strike groups to the region, and at present threatens to spill conflict and flows of Palestinian refugees across borders.

In Cairo this weekend, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi was one of a succession of Arab leaders to warn Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who is scrambling through Middle East capitals to try to contain the conflict, that the Israel-Gaza war threatens the stability of the entire Middle East.

Biden is likely to hear the same as he meets with leaders of Jordan, Egypt and the Palestinian Authority in Jordan on Wednesday after he travels to Israel.

El-Sissi, who fears the Israeli military offensive will push Gaza's 2.3 million people across the border into Egypt, cast blame on the near-disappearance of any international pressure on Netanyahu's government and Palestinians to return to negotiations.

El-Sissi cited "a buildup of outrage and hatred for more than 40 years" and the lack of any "horizon to solve the Palestinian cause; one that gives hope to the Palestinians" for a state with a capital in East Jerusalem.

Saudi Arabia, meanwhile, pointed to Saudis' "repeated warnings of the danger of the explosion."

Arab leaders "are very aware this is going to keep blowing up. And they might ride it out this time, they might ride it out next time, as they have in the past," said Yezid Sayigh, a senior fellow at the Malcolm H. Kerr Carnegie Middle East Center in Beirut, Lebanon.

"But it's not actually a comfortable position for them to be endlessly living in," with endless cycles of Israeli and Palestinian wars that threaten the region's peace and economies, said Sayigh, who accused the U.S. of encouraging Netanyahu to think there was no need to address Palestinian concerns.

Underscoring his administration's diminished emphasis on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Biden's call to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas this past weekend amid the building Gaza war was the American leader's first since taking office.

In 1973, Arab nations' surprise attack on Israel, and Arabs' devastating oil embargo on the U.S. and other countries for their support of Israel in that fight, convinced U.S. leaders that a lasting resolution to Palestinian demands for statehood was in America's strategic interest.

But after some early successes, recurring violence, the disappointments of past failed mediation efforts, and the scale of the disputes helped derail the U.S. push. By the time Biden, a strong supporter of the

state of Israel, took office, any support for major negotiations among Israelis was faint.

Blinken and other U.S. officials have pointed to steps taken by the administration they say were aimed at improving conditions before making any push for a return to talks on a political solution to the long-lasting conflict. That includes restoring U.S. aid to the Palestinians after then-President Donald Trump cut almost all of it, and Blinken's January trip to the occupied West Bank city of Ramallah, where he said Biden remains committed to the goal of Palestinian statehood.

There's little to suggest that more ambitious engagement by Biden on Israeli-Palestinian issues would have made immediate progress, or done anything to discourage the attack by Hamas, whose charter calls for the destruction of Israel.

Even after a 2021 burst of fighting between Hamas and Israel, administration figures argued that a big push on peace efforts would undermine more easily won goals, like cease-fires with Hamas.

Instead, Biden has enthusiastically followed the new path that Trump had laid out on Middle East peace-making: lobbying for so-called normalization deals with Arab countries, absent any Israeli-Palestinian accord.

Under Trump, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Morocco all signed normalization deals establishing diplomatic relations with Israel.

Up until Oct. 7, Biden appeared to be fast closing in on brokering a normalization deal with the biggest prize of all, regional heavyweight Saudi Arabia.

Then, Hamas' breakout from Gaza shattered what National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan had hailed as a period of Middle East calm. The violence has been the deadliest of five wars between Hamas and Israel, killing more than 1,400 people in Israel and at least 2,778 in Gaza, not including hundreds reported killed in an explosion at a Gaza City hospital Tuesday.

It's not clear what happens to Biden's normalization push now. Despite their angry comments and varying degrees of popular support among their public for the Palestinian cause, America's Arab partners are pragmatists, and like the U.S. and Israel, adversaries of Hamas and other Iran-backed groups.

Additionally, the Biden administration's immediate and all-in rallying to Israel's mounting defense after Hamas's Oct. 7 massacres may only heighten Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's desire to lock in that kind of security alliance with the U.S. for the kingdom, many analysts are arguing.

"I think Gulf partners are looking at the quick, decisive response that the U.S. has provided Israel, and are incredibly jealous," said Jonathan Lord, director of the Middle East security program at the Center for a New American Security think tank.

Brokering those alliances would stabilize the Middle East in themselves, no Israeli-Palestinian peace accord needed, supporters have argued.

The nightmare unfolding now for Israeli and Palestinian civilians argues differently, when it comes to Biden's approach, critics say.

"As long as the core issues stay unresolved, ignoring them does not make them go away," said Yousef Munayyer, who heads the Palestine-Israel program at the Arab Center, a Washington think tank. "And I think that's a lesson for everybody."

## Appeals court allows Alex Murdaugh to argue for new trial because of possible jury tampering

By JEFFREY COLLINS Associated Press

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) — An appeals court in South Carolina is allowing Alex Murdaugh to ask a judge to throw out his murder convictions and life sentence and get a new trial after his lawyers accused the court clerk in his trial of influencing the jury.

The one-paragraph decision Tuesday could open the door for a full hearing where witnesses who would have to testify under oath could include Colleton County Clerk of Court Rebecca Hill, the jurors who deliberated a few hours after the six-week trial and even Judge Clifton Newman, widely praised for overseeing the case.

A time and place or the scope of the hearing will be determined later.

But even if his conviction is overturned, Murdaugh won't walk out of prison. He pleaded guilty last month to financial crimes for stealing millions of dollars from needy personal injury clients and a settlement for the family of his longtime maid who died in a fall at his home.

Murdaugh is awaiting a judge to hand down a sentence for those crimes that will almost certainly be for years if not decades behind bars.

Murdaugh's lawyers filed their appeal last month after saying they had heard from three jurors who said Hill told some of them not to trust Murdaugh when he testified in his own defense. They said the court clerk, in charge of helping jurors and ensuring the trial ran efficiently, also had private conversations with the jury foreperson and pressured jurors to come to a quick verdict.

"She asked jurors about their opinions about Mr. Murdaugh's guilt or innocence. She instructed them not to believe evidence presented in Mr. Murdaugh's defense, including his own testimony. She lied to the judge to remove a juror she believed might not vote guilty. And she pressured jurors to reach a guilty verdict quickly so she could profit from it," defense attorneys Jim Griffin and Dick Harpootlian wrote.

The attorneys called Tuesday's ruling welcome news. "We intend to proceed expeditiously and will seek a full blown evidentiary hearing," they said in a statement.

Hill has spoken little publicly about the allegations and her lawyer didn't respond to a text message Tuesday. But the author who helped her write a self-published book called "Behind the Doors of Justice: The Murdaugh Murders" asked people to give Hill the same presumption of innocence they were supposed to give Murdaugh during the trial.

Co-author Neil Gordon said Hill was professional, soft-spoken and never pressured anyone.

"I've received hundreds of unsolicited comments from visitors and media who were at the trial or who came back to do a tour at the Colleton County Courthouse. They describe her as the quintessential Southern woman of hospitality and grace," Gordon told the Hampton County Guardian.

Hill's book discusses how her Christian faith helped her navigate the sudden fame and responsibility that came with the Murdaugh trial. She said she became convinced of Murdaugh's guilt when jurors and court officials visited the family home where the shootings happened.

She wrote she was nervous as she prepared to read the verdicts. "I was mostly concerned about Alex being found innocent when I knew in my heart he was guilty," Hill wrote.

The jury deliberated less than three hours after the six-week trial. At least one juror said Hill told them they would be taken to a hotel if they didn't reach a verdict by 11 p.m., upsetting jurors who didn't pack for an overnight stay. Some jurors said Hill also told smokers on the jury that they couldn't take a cigarette break until they had reached a verdict, according to the defense motion.

"I had questions about Mr. Murdaugh's guilt but voted guilty because I felt pressured by other jurors," Juror 630 wrote in a sworn statement, adding that Hill pressured the jurors to talk to reporters she had befriended after the trial.

The South Carolina Attorney General's Office, which prosecuted Murdaugh, said it had no comment on Tuesday's ruling and would respond through the courts.

## **Belgian police kill Tunisian man suspected of shooting 3 Swedish soccer fans, killing 2 of them**

By LORNE COOK, SYLVAIN PLAZY and RAF CASERT Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — Authorities in the Belgian capital shot and killed a Tunisian national on Tuesday hours after they say he gunned down three Swedish soccer fans, killing two of them, and posted a video online in which he claimed credit for the attack and said the Quran was "a red line for which he is ready to sacrifice himself."

Investigators are still trying to determine the motive for Monday night's attack, which happened not far from where Belgium's men's soccer team was hosting Sweden in a European Championships qualifier.

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The match was suspended at halftime and the more than 35,000 fans were kept inside the stadium as a precaution while the attacker was at large.

Amateur videos of the attack posted on social media showed a man wearing an orange fluorescent vest pull up on a scooter, take out a large weapon and open fire on people getting out of a taxi. He chased them into a building to gun them down. He was also filmed calmly loading his weapon as cars drove by slowly.

Sweden's foreign ministry said the men who were killed were in their 60s and 70s, and the man who was wounded is in his 70s and remains hospitalized.

Hours after the suspect disappeared into the night and a manhunt was launched, Interior Minister Annelies Verlinden posted on X, formerly Twitter, that "the perpetrator of the terrorist attack in Brussels has been identified and has died."

She thanked Belgium's intelligence and security services, as well as prosecutors, "for their swift and decisive action." The man was shot in the Schaerbeek neighborhood near where the attack happened.

Federal prosecutors said later that the suspect, a 45-year-old Tunisian man who had been living in Belgium illegally and whose name hasn't been released, was found after a witness spotted him in a Schaerbeek cafe. Police arrived at the scene and the suspect was shot as they tried to arrest him. First responders attempted to save the man, but he later died in hospital.

The weapon used in the assault, an AR-15-type semiautomatic rifle, and a bag of clothes were recovered at the scene, federal prosecutor Frederic Van Leeuw said at a Tuesday evening news conference. Police launched four raids Tuesday morning and detained two people for questioning over their possible links to the suspect, he said, noting that authorities haven't ruled out the possibility that he might have had help.

"It does not seem at the stage of the investigation that the terrorist attack was organized by a large terror network," Van Leeuw said. "The hypothesis that he was acting as a lone wolf seems more likely."

Police also found two handguns and a knife close to where the suspect had been living, he said.

At a pre-dawn news conference, Prime Minister Alexander De Croo called the attack an act of "total cowardice" and said security had been beefed up in Brussels. It was noticeably boosted around places linked to the Swedish community and at Belgium's southern border with France.

"Last night, three people left for what was supposed to be a wonderful soccer party. Two of them lost their lives in a brutal terrorist attack," De Croo said. "Their lives were cut short in full flight, cut down by extreme brutality."

The attack comes amid heightened global tensions over the war between Israel and Hamas. France's anti-terror prosecutor said Tuesday that a suspected Islamic extremist declared allegiance to the Islamic State group before fatally stabbing a teacher at a French school attack last week. However, Belgian prosecutors said nothing suggests that Monday's attack was linked to what's happening in Israel and Gaza.

At a news conference in Stockholm, Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson said that "everything indicates this is a terrorist attack against Sweden and Swedish citizens, just because they are Swedish." He said the suspect had occasionally stayed in Sweden but was not on police files there.

"It's not an unusual pattern to move around," Kristersson added. "We have an openness in Europe, which is one of the important reasons why we need to keep an eye on the EU's external border because otherwise people can easily move between European countries."

Van Leeuw said the suspect posted a video online claiming to have killed three Swedish people and saying the Quran was "a red line for which he is ready to sacrifice himself."

Sweden raised its terror alert to the second-highest level in August after a series of public Quran burnings by an Iraqi refugee living in Sweden resulted in threats from Islamic militant groups.

Asked if this might be a possible motive, federal prosecutor Eric Van Duyse told The Associated Press that it's too early to tell. "The connection seems easy to make, but we must have evidence, we must have proof."

Questions remain over how a man whose name was in police files, who was thought to have been radicalized and who was being sought for deportation was able to obtain such a weapon and launch such an attack.



According to Justice Minister Vincent Van Quickenborne, the suspect was denied asylum in 2019. He was known to police and had been suspected of involvement of human trafficking, living illegally in Belgium and of being a risk to state security.

Information provided to the Belgian authorities by an unidentified foreign government suggested that the man had been radicalized and intended to travel abroad to fight in a holy war. But the Belgian authorities were not able to establish this, so he was never listed as dangerous.

Belgian Asylum State Secretary Nicole de Moor said the man disappeared after his asylum application was refused, so authorities were unable to locate him to organize his deportation.

Jesper Tengroth, a spokesman for the Swedish Migration Agency, told Swedish public radio that the suspected gunman lived in Sweden from 2012-2014 and spent part of that time in prison before being sent to another EU country under the Dublin rules. Tengroth declined to say which crime the man was convicted of or which country he was sent to after completing his sentence.

After being raised to its highest level, 4, just after the attack, the terror alert for Brussels was lowered to a 3, in line with the rest of Belgium, indicating a moderate threat.

## **No place is safe in Gaza after Israel targets areas where civilians seek refuge, Palestinians say**

By WAFAA SHURAFI and SAMYA KULLAB Associated Press

DEIR al-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — Even the “safe zones” of Gaza aren’t safe for Palestinians.

Intense Israeli strikes Tuesday destroyed homes, hit a U.N. school sheltering the displaced and killed dozens of people in south and central Gaza.

“The situation is very, very difficult with artillery shelling and aerial bombardment on homes and defenseless people,” said Abu Hashem Abu al-Husein, who initially welcomed displaced families into his home in Khan Younis, but then fled to a U.N. school, where he hoped to find safety himself.

Israel had told Palestinians over the weekend to evacuate northern Gaza and Gaza City in advance of an expected ground invasion of the territory following an attack by Hamas militants last week that killed at least 1,400 Israelis.

An estimated 600,000 people complied, packing what belongings they could and rushing to the south, where they squeezed into overcrowded U.N. shelters, hospitals, and homes in the approximately 14-kilometer (8-mile) long area south of the evacuation zone.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu accused Hamas on Tuesday of preventing people from “getting out of harm’s way,” and he again urged Palestinians to head “south to safe zones”

For some on Tuesday, there was no safety to be had there.

After midnight Tuesday morning, an explosion shattered Moataz al-Zre’e’s windows. He rushed outside to find his neighbor Ibrahim’s entire home had been razed. The house next door was damaged also. At least 12 people from two families were killed, including three people from a family displaced from Gaza City.

“There was no (Israeli) warning,” he said. Al-Zre’e’s sister was gravely wounded and five of his paternal cousins were also injured following the attack. “Most of the killed were women and children.”

Stunned residents took stock of the damage from another strike in Khan Younis. Samiha Zoarab looked around at the destruction in shock, as children rummaged through piles of rubble around the destroyed home, which lies amid a dense cluster of buildings.

At least four people from the same family were killed in the attack, she said. “There are only two survivors,” she said.

A strike hit a U.N. school in central Gaza where 4,000 Palestinians had taken refuge, killing six people, the U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees said.

A barrage leveled a block of homes in the central Gaza Bureij refugee camp, killing many inside, residents said. Among the killed was Ayman Nofal, a top Hamas military commander.

Strikes also hit the cities of Rafah, where 27 were reported killed, and Khan Younis, where 30 were

reported killed, according to Bassem Naim, a senior Hamas official.

The Israeli military said it was targeting Hamas hideouts, infrastructure and command centers.

The strikes came even as residents struggled with an Israeli blockade that cut off the flow of water, food, fuel and medicine to the area.

The Kuwait Speciality Hospital in the southern city of Rafah has received two orders from the Israeli military to evacuate said staff had just two hours to leave after Sunday's order, in a video posted to the hospital's Facebook group. The second came Monday at 10 p.m., as medics worked around the clock to resuscitate patients. "We shall not evacuate," he said.

The Israeli army did not immediately comment on why it had called for the hospital evacuation.

Apart from the near-constant stream of wounded patients, the hospital was also sheltering hundreds of people inside its halls and surroundings. Israel "has left no red line they did not cross, nor an international convention they did not violate," said al-Hams. The safety of hospitals, he added, was the last red line left.

## The mother of an Israeli woman in a Hamas hostage video appeals for her release

By AMI BENTOV and AMY TEIBEL Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — The mother of a young Israeli woman held by Hamas appealed for her release on Tuesday, calling the seizure of around 200 hostages by the Palestinian militant group "a crime against humanity."

Hamas' military wing released a video on Monday showing a dazed Mia Schem, 21, having her arm wrapped with bandages. It was the first sign of life from any of the hostages since Gaza-based gunmen smashed through border fortifications on Oct. 7, killing more than 1,400 people in Israel.

"I didn't know if she's dead or alive until yesterday," her mother, Keren Schem, said at a news conference. "All I knew is that she might be kidnapped. I'm begging the world to bring my baby back home. She only went to a party, to a festival party to have some fun. Now she's in Gaza."

Mia Schem was seized at a desert rave just over the border from Gaza that became the site of what is believed to be the worst civilian massacre in Israeli history. At least 260 people were gunned down as heavily armed militants in trucks and on motorcycles barreled through the vast field on Kibbutz Re'im where thousands had gathered for a carefree night of electronic music.

Civilians and soldiers, young and old, Israelis and non-Israelis were among at least 199 people taken into captivity from Re'im and other areas in southern Israel.

"This is a crime against humanity and we should all gather and stop this terror and bring everybody back home," Keren Schem said.

The U.S. on Tuesday called on Hamas to immediately release all hostages, which include American citizens.

"There should be no reason for them to have any hostages in the first place. And number two, we're working very, very hard with our partners in the region to secure the release of all the hostages," U.S. National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said on NBC's "Today" show. "We know there's a small number of Americans, but all of them need to come home and be with their families, and we're working on that very, very hard."

The plight of the hostages has dominated Israel's media since the attack. The seizure of so many civilian hostages is unprecedented in Israel's history, and interviews with relatives are broadcast throughout the day.

The Israeli military said Schem's family was told of her abduction last week, and officials dismissed the video as propaganda designed to make Hamas look humane. Israeli officials have vowed to maintain a siege on Gaza until the hostages are released.

Mia Schem has dual nationality with France, and on Tuesday, French President Emmanuel Macron decried the hostage-taking.

"To have taken hostages, both civilian and military, of all nationalities and to use blackmail at this time is absolutely odious and unacceptable," Macron said at a news conference in Albania.

France, he added, was working with Israeli authorities and with Hamas through third parties to win the release of French and other hostages.

## **Palestinian medics in Gaza struggle to save lives under Israeli siege and bombardment**

By ISABEL DEBRE and WAFAA SHURAF A Associated Press

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip (AP) — For hours and hours, Moen Abu Aish digs through the rubble of demolished homes to find survivors of Israeli airstrikes, toiling in a vast and desperate search complicated by the shortage of critical supplies and the sheer scope of destruction across the Gaza Strip.

Even as rescue worker Abu Aish, 58, and his colleagues struggle to pry lifeless bodies from the concrete and twisted metal where residential towers once stood, the death toll keeps rising. Gaza's Health Ministry has reported that Israel's bombardment — launched after Hamas mounted a bloody, unprecedented attack on Israel on Oct. 7 — has killed more than 2,700 Palestinians, many of them women and children.

But far more Palestinians have been killed than have been officially reported, with 1,200 people, among them around 500 minors, believed to be trapped under the rubble awaiting rescue, or recovery, health authorities said. They based their estimates on distress calls they received.

"So many times medics say they hear victims scream, but they cannot do anything about it," said Mohammed Abu Selmia, general director of Shifa Hospital, Gaza's biggest medical center.

The untold scores of victims buried beneath destroyed buildings shed light on the struggles of rescue teams in Gaza trying to save lives, while cut off from the internet and mobile networks, running out of fuel and exposed to unceasing airstrikes.

Israel imposed a siege on Gaza after the Hamas attack, severing the crowded strip's access to water, power and fuel. Health authorities have warned that without humanitarian aid, hospitals and emergency services will soon break down. Hospitals running on backup generators say they have enough fuel for another day or two at most.

"The destruction is so intense, there are hundreds of dead under the rubble as we speak," said Mahmoud Basal, the spokesperson for the Palestinian Civil Defense, which provides emergency services, his voice cracking as he fought back tears. "Where are the Arab countries? Where is the rest of the world? We are begging you, please, save us from this madness."

At dawn Monday, Israeli warplanes struck the headquarters of the Civil Defense in Gaza City, killing seven paramedics as they prepared for a rescue mission, the Interior Ministry said. In widely shared videos of the aftermath, medics, shellshocked and exhausted, crouched on the back of their blood-smeared ambulance with their heads in their hands.

"They targeted a center for ambulances," one of them cried out, his voice frantic. "There are no weapons. There are no militants. There is nothing, nothing but civilians."

The Israeli military didn't immediately comment on the airstrike, but has alleged in the past that Hamas militants use hospitals and rescue services as protective cover. It says it only targets sites and infrastructure used by Hamas and other militant groups.

Since the start of this war, 16 other medics have been killed on the job, the Gaza government press office said.

"I'm terrified all the time, of course I am. I'm human," Abu Aish said from Al Awda Hospital in northern Gaza, where doctors had refused an Israeli military order to evacuate earlier this week. "I see the worst things you could imagine."

Like most medics, Abu Aish has spent the past days in the hospital's ambulance bay, sleeping a few hours before returning to his grueling work. The massive blasts ripping through the northern Jabaliya refugee camp where he lives have been bad enough, he said.

What made them worse wasn't knowing how his loved ones fared.

Since Israeli bombardment destroyed two of Gaza's three main lines for mobile communication last week,

he hasn't spoken to his family in five days.

"I miss them so much it hurts," he said of his seven kids and 10 grandchildren. "But this is my mission. I respect it."

At the hospital, distress calls follow the nearby thunder of explosions. Abu Aish drives as far as he can in the ambulance and jumps out when the roads buckle so badly they can't be used. Rushing in the opposite direction of panicked families, he and his team arrive by foot to ravaged homes with little more than flashlights, shovels and other amateur tools, like pickaxes, saws, backhoes and blowtorches to cut metal bars.

The rescue crews in their bright vests and white helmets largely lack excavators, ladders and heavy machinery — the outcome of a blockade imposed by Israel and Egypt in 2007 to prevent Hamas from digging tunnels and rearming itself. Abu Aish often uses his bare hands to sort through chunks of concrete mixed with residents' belongings and personal mementos.

But as the rescuers work, they hear bombardment crashing in the distance. Another block of homes, flattened. More people who need their help, urgently.

Residents say it often takes rescue crews many hours to reach the site of an attack and search for victims. By that point, the chances of finding additional survivors are slim.

Ali Ahad, a 37-year-old resident of Gaza City, said that when airstrikes leveled the residential building next door, rescuers never came.

He and his friends sprinted outside in their slippers, sifted through the rubble and struggled to lift men and women coated in blood out of the ruins with blankets. When they saw an ambulance racing down the street to Shifa Hospital they chased it, pounding on its windows to make it stop so they could squeeze their neighbors inside.

"You have people like us using our hands and we have zero experience doing such things," he said. "There is no infrastructure. There is no capacity."

Rescuers say they try to save as many lives as they can. But at any point, they may have to save themselves.

Among the 16 medics killed over the past week were four workers with the Palestinian Red Crescent. Airstrikes last Wednesday slammed into their ambulances in two different places.

Three of those killed that day had been waiting to evacuate civilians in Jabaliya.

"I was traumatized by that loss," said their colleague, Salem Abu Al-Khair. As he spoke from the ambulance center, the roar of airstrikes could be heard.

"Even during this interview, we are being bombed," he said. "This is the extent of the danger."

Good news is rare for Gaza's medics. On Thursday, after airstrikes hit Jabaliya, Abu Aish found a mother hugging a small child under the rubble. The mother had been killed, along with the rest of the family members in the collapsed building.

But the child, a boy no more than 3 years old, was alive.

Abu Aish pulled him out of the rubble and took him to the ambulance. He was covered in dirt but completely healthy, he said.

"Those moments give me the will to carry on," he said. "That's my work. I never want to let one child like that die."

## **Lawyers, Trump and money: Ex-president spends millions in donor cash on attorneys as legal woes grow**

By RICHARD LARDNER, TRENTON DANIEL and AARON KESSLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Donald Trump's political fundraising machine is raking in donations at a prodigious pace, but he's spending tens of millions of dollars he's bringing in to pay attorneys to deal with the escalating costs of the various criminal cases he is contending with as he moves further into the 2024 presidential campaign.

Campaign finance experts say using the money to pay for lawyers in cases not related to the campaign or



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officeholder duties appears to conflict with a federal ban on the personal use of donor dollars, even though the Federal Election Commission has ruled the prohibition doesn't apply to so-called leadership political action committees. The massive amount of money going to lawyers also amplifies the urgency Trump is feeling to raise money both for the campaign and his legal defense, which is unfolding on multiple fronts.

Trump's Save America political action committee has paid nearly \$37 million to more than 60 law firms and individual attorneys since January 2022, Federal Election Commission records show. That amounts to more than half of the PAC's total expenditures, according to an Associated Press analysis of campaign finance filings, and represents a staggering sum compared to other political organizations.

During the first half of 2023, Save America spent more on legal-related costs, over \$20 million, than any other political committee that discloses to the FEC — more than the Republican National Committee, Democratic National Committee and National Republican Senatorial Committee spent during that period combined.

The bulk of the Trump PAC money went to law firms that have defended Trump against a series of criminal charges or in civil lawsuits. Other attorneys paid with the contributions worked on behalf of Trump's businesses, his children, former White House aides and employees of the ex-president.

Footing the legal bills for co-defendants and potential witnesses raises additional thorny ethical questions: Will the attorneys paid by Trump be more loyal to him or their clients? If clients feel indebted to Trump, will they be less forthcoming about what they know?

"The way these cases get built is you persuade the little fish to testify against the big fish," said Randall Eliason, a former federal prosecutor and criminal law professor at George Washington University Law School. "Well, if the little fish's lawyer is being paid by the big fish that's less likely to happen potentially."

The Trump campaign did not respond to a request for comment. \_\_\_\_\_

Trump's status as the first former president to be criminally indicted, his run for another White House term while defending himself in multiple court cases, and the loads of donor money flowing to lawyers are a trifecta unparalleled in U.S. history. Trump has denied any wrongdoing and he and his allies have blasted the long list of felony charges and lawsuits as political attacks meant to derail his 2024 campaign.

But the legal jeopardy has become his most potent fundraising tool. Trump's claim that he's the victim of a corrupt justice system determined to silence him and his supporters is a primary plank in his platform. And he's turned the courthouse into a campaign stage to pound that message and fire up his supporters.

As Trump's civil fraud trial in New York got underway earlier this month, he used the heavy media coverage as a megaphone. To the cameras stationed in the courthouse hallways, Trump denounced state Attorney General Letitia James' case as "a witch hunt and a disgrace." He and his company are accused by James of inflating the value of his real estate empire to deceive banks and insurers.

Trump also turned his surrender in Georgia on charges that he illegally schemed to overturn the 2020 election in the state into a fundraising bonanza. His presidential campaign said it has sold about 47,000 T-shirts, coffee mugs and posters featuring the mug shot taken of the former president when he was booked in August at the at the Fulton County Jail. Overall, the campaign said it raised \$9.4 million in the days following the photo's release. That money is earmarked for political and campaign activities, not for legal expenses, according to the campaign.

To help pay the legal fees, Trump's political operation has also moved millions from his super PAC, MAGA Inc.

The FEC data reveal a pattern that has developed since Trump left office: he gets into legal trouble and responds forcefully, donations from his backers spike, and then millions of those dollars flow to the army of attorneys defending him and others caught up in the drama.

The second and third quarters of 2022 illustrate the cycle. Save America spent about \$1.5 million on legal fees in the second quarter. During the third, payments to attorneys grew to more than \$6 million. The surge coincided with the FBI's court-authorized search for top-secret documents he allegedly hoarded at his Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida, which federal prosecutors say violated laws meant to keep classified information secret.

"The indictments are probably not expanding his coalition, but it's certainly giving it greater intensity,"

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said Anthony Michael Kreis, a law professor at Georgia State University. "So people who are already supporting Donald Trump are probably going to dig in their heels and support him more."

That's true of at least some donors, who say they have no problem with their money going to lawyers. "First thing I thought: What a crock," said Robert Lee, a motorcycle repairman in Boca Raton, Florida, who made a small donation after the FBI's Mar-a-Lago search. "None of this ever happened to anyone who wasn't Trump."

Asked about a presidential campaign that spends so much on legal expenses, Lee said, "That would be fine with me. I see nothing wrong with that."

In addition to the New York business fraud case and the election case in Georgia, Trump is battling federal felony counts arising from the Mar-a-Lago records case in Florida and the 2020 election subversion case in Washington, D.C. In a separate New York state case, he's accused of making hush money payments during the 2016 presidential campaign to keep a sexual relationship from becoming public. Trump has denied the affair and pleaded not guilty to the charges involving the payment.

Two of Trump's most heavily compensated lawyers, Alina Habba and Christopher Kise, flanked the ex-president at the defendants' table when the trial in James' business fraud lawsuit began earlier this month.

Habba is the managing partner of Habba Madaio & Associates in Bedminster, New Jersey. Her small litigation firm, which is near Trump's eponymous golf course, has received almost \$3.5 million from Save America.

Habba has also been engaged in several civil cases for Trump, according to court records, including an ongoing defamation lawsuit brought by advice columnist E. Jean Carroll, whom a jury found was sexually assaulted by Trump. Habba is his attorney in a lawsuit he filed against his niece, Mary Trump, and New York Times reporters for an "insidious plot" he claims they masterminded to obtain his income tax records.

Kise left the megafirm Foley & Lardner to be one of Trump's attorneys. His firm, Chris Kise and Associates, received \$2.8 million from the PAC. Along with the New York fraud lawsuit, he has a lead role in the Mar-a-Lago records case. Kise has deep ties to Florida's Republican party. He worked on the transition teams for Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis and Sen. Rick Scott.

Last year, Kise joined Florida-based Continental PLLC, a law firm that has separately received nearly \$2.9 million. Court records show two other Continental attorneys were involved in early stages of the records case.

Critton, Luttier & Coleman, a law firm in West Palm Beach, Florida, received \$3 million from Save America, according to the FEC filings. The firm did not respond to a request for comment about the work it did.

Ciara Torres-Spelliscy, a professor at Stetson University College of Law in Florida, said the risk of paying defense attorneys with contributions is that the FEC or the Justice Department may later decide that it was an illegal personal use of campaign funds. She doubted such a case would be brought against Trump now because doing so might slow the ongoing federal prosecutions overseen by Justice Department Special Counsel Jack Smith.

"But after the Mar-a-Lago and January 6th cases are done, I would not be surprised to see a personal use case against Trump for using these millions in donations that are meant to go to his political campaign going instead for the personal use of keeping him out of prison," Torres-Spelliscy said.

The FEC declined to comment for this story, but it seems unlikely to act anytime soon. The agency is led by six commissioners, evenly split between Republicans and Democrats. Trump nominated all the GOP commissioners. One of the Democratic commissioners, appointed by President Joe Biden, joined with the Republicans to declare in March the personal use ban didn't apply to leadership PACs.

Saurav Ghosh, director of federal campaign finance reform at the non-profit Campaign Legal Center, criticized what he called the FEC's "blinker and narrow view of the personal use prohibition."

"The FEC is a dysfunctional agency that often fails to enforce the law because several commissioners don't genuinely support the mission of the agency and favor a deregulatory approach to campaign finance laws," Ghosh said.

The hands-off approach, he added, has allowed Trump to exploit the people who give him money to help him politically.

"It does feel like donors are being taken advantage of to advance Donald J. Trump's personal interests," Ghosh said.

In a recently unsealed court filing, Smith and his team of prosecutors described Trump's decision to pay the legal fees of co-defendants and potential witnesses as part of a pattern of his "obstructive conduct" in its investigations. The former president "presents a significant risk of tampering with evidence (and) seeking to influence or intimidate potential witnesses," according to the filing.

Those concerns are amplified in court records filed by Smith's team in the Mar-a-Lago case.

About two weeks after the FBI found reams of classified documents in a storage room, Trump called a Mar-a-Lago employee with whom he is alleged to have discussed deleting security camera footage of the property, according to a July indictment. Trump assured the employee, property manager Carlos De Oliveira, that he would get him a lawyer.

De Oliveira was later charged as a third defendant in the case. He's accused of scheming with Trump and his valet, Walt Nauta, to conceal the footage from investigators. Court records show De Oliveira is being represented by John Irving of Earth & Water Law, a firm that has received more than \$338,000 in payments, according to the campaign finance reports.

De Oliveira and Nauta have pleaded not guilty.

Another firm, Brand Woodward Law, represents Nauta and has been paid more than \$350,000. Prosecutors handling the Mar-a-Lago case argued at a hearing last week that Nauta's lawyer, Stanley Woodward, has a conflict of interest based on his prior representation of a key government witness: a Mar-a-Lago information technology worker who has since struck a cooperation deal with the government. Woodward has denied any conflict and has disputed prosecutors' characterization of events, and the judge in the case cut short last Thursday's hearing and scolded prosecutors for presenting arguments that she said were not properly raised earlier.

Trump's former chief of staff, Mark Meadows, who was indicted along with Trump and others in the election interference case in Georgia, is represented by the law firm McGuireWoods. The firm received almost \$900,000.

None of that matters to donors contacted by the AP. Dawn Smelcer of Fayetteville, North Carolina, a frequent donor to Trump's 2024 campaign, said she's backing Trump because of the "mistreatment" he's endured.

"He's fighting an evil and we're helping him to fight that evil," she said.

## **Math disabilities hold many students back. Schools often don't screen for them**

By JACKIE MADER of The Hechinger Report

Laura Jackson became seriously concerned about her daughter and math when the girl was in third grade. While many of her classmates flew through multiplication tests, Jackson's daughter relied on her fingers to count, had difficulty reading clocks and burst into tears when asked at home to practice math flashcards.

At school, the 9-year-old had been receiving help from a math specialist for two years, with little improvement.

"We hit a point where she was asking me, 'Mom, am I stupid?'" Jackson recalled.

One day, when having lunch with a friend, Jackson heard about a disorder known as dyscalculia. She later looked up a description of the learning disability that impacts a child's ability to process numbers and retain math knowledge. "I was like, 'Oh my gosh, this is my kid,'" Jackson said.

The Education Reporting Collaborative, a coalition of eight newsrooms, is documenting the math crisis facing schools and highlighting progress. Join our live expert panel for families, "Solving The Math Problem," at 8 p.m. Eastern on Tuesday, Oct. 17, at <https://st.news/mathwebinar>. Members of the Collaborative are

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AL.com, The Associated Press, The Christian Science Monitor, The Dallas Morning News, The Hechinger Report, Idaho Education News, The Post and Courier in South Carolina, and The Seattle Times.

Nationwide, hundreds of thousands of students face challenges learning math due to disabilities like dyscalculia, a neurodevelopmental learning disorder caused by differences in parts of the brain that are involved with numbers and calculations. There are often obstacles to getting help.

America's schools have long struggled to identify and support students with learning disabilities of all kinds. Kids often languish while waiting to receive a diagnosis; families frequently have to turn to private providers to get one; and even with a diagnosis, some schools are unable to provide children the help they need.

That's slowly changing — for some disabilities. Most states have passed laws that mandate screening early elementary students for the most common reading disability, dyslexia, and countless districts train teachers to recognize struggling readers. Meanwhile, parents and experts say schools neglect students with math disabilities like dyscalculia, which affects up to 7% of the population and often coexists with dyslexia.

"There's not as much research on math disorders or dyscalculia," as there is on reading disabilities, said Karen Wilson, a clinical neuropsychologist who specializes in the assessment of children with learning differences. "That also trickles down into schools."

Math scores in the U.S. have remained dismal for years and only worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic. Learning struggles for some may be due to dyscalculia or other math learning disabilities, yet few teachers report their students have been screened for dyscalculia.

Experts say learning the most effective methods for teaching students with math disabilities could strengthen math instruction for all students.

"If it works for the students with the most severe disconnections and slower processing speeds, it's still going to work for the kids that are in the 'middle' with math difficulties," said Sandra Elliott, a former special education teacher and current chief academic officer at TouchMath, a multisensory math program.

Some signs of dyscalculia are obvious at an early age, if parents and educators know what to look for. Young children might have difficulty recognizing numbers or patterns. In elementary school, students may have trouble with math functions like addition and subtraction, word problems, counting money or remembering directions.

Even after Jackson learned about dyscalculia on her own, her daughter's Seattle-area public school was doubtful the third grader had a learning disability because she was performing well in other areas. Teachers suggested Jackson spend extra time on math at home.

"For so many parents, they assume the school would let them know there's an issue, but that's just not how it works," said Jackson, who ultimately wrote a book, "Discovering Dyscalculia," about her family's journey.

Students with dyscalculia often need a more structured approach to learning math that involves "systematic and explicit" instruction, said Lynn Fuchs, a research professor in special education and human development at Vanderbilt University.

Part of the problem is that teachers don't receive the training needed to work with children with math disabilities. At least one state, Virginia, requires dyslexia awareness training for teacher licensure renewal, but has no similar requirement for math disability training.

"It's pretty rare for undergraduate degrees or even master's degrees to focus on math learning disabilities with any level of breadth, depth, quality or rigor," said Amelia Malone, director of research and innovation at the National Center for Learning Disabilities.

Without more widespread knowledge of and support for dyscalculia, many parents have had to look for specialists and tutors on their own, which they say can be particularly challenging for math, and costly. In 2019, Jackson started pulling her daughter out of school for part of each day to teach her math at home.

"I am not a math teacher, but I was so desperate," Jackson said. "There's no one who knows anything, and we have to figure this out."



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At the tutoring organization Made for Math, specialists have found children with dyscalculia need repetition, especially to understand math facts. Some students attend tutoring up to four days a week, at a cost of up to \$1,000 a month.

"It's hard because it's not something schools are offering, and kids deserve it," said Heather Brand, a math specialist and operations manager for the organization.

There are pockets of progress around the country in screening more children for math disabilities, but movement at the federal level — and in most states — is "nonexistent," said Malone, of the National Center for Learning Disabilities.

New York City is one district that has prioritized math disability screening and math instruction in the early years. In 2015 and 2016, the city spent \$6 million to roll out a math curriculum featuring games, building blocks, art projects and songs. The district has also introduced universal math and reading screeners to try to identify students who may be behind.

There are ways that all schools can make math instruction more accessible, experts say. In elementary schools, activities that involve more senses should be used more widely, including whole-body motions and songs for teaching numbers and hands-on materials for math operations.

Jackson said her daughter could have benefited from a wider variety of methods at school. When the teen returned to school-based math classes in high school, after several years of learning math at home, she achieved an A in algebra.

"When you really understand what it is to be dyscalculic, then you can look around and decide what this person needs to succeed," Jackson said. "It's not just that you're 'bad at math' and need to buckle down and try harder."

## Putin begins visit in China underscoring ties amid Ukraine war and Israeli-Palestinian conflict

By CHRISTOPHER BODEEN Associated Press

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP) — Russian President Vladimir Putin arrived in Beijing on Tuesday for a visit that underscores China's support for Moscow during its war in Ukraine as well as Russian backing for China's bid to expand its economic and diplomatic influence abroad.

The two countries have forged an informal alliance against the United States and other democratic nations that is now complicated by the Israel-Hamas war. China has sought to balance its ties with Israel against its relations with Iran and Syria, two countries that are strongly backed by Russia and with which China has forged ties for economic reasons as well as to challenge Washington's influence in the Middle East.

Putin's plane was met by an honor guard as the Russian leader began his visit that is also a show of support for Chinese leader Xi Jinping's signature "Belt and Road" initiative to build infrastructure and expand China's overseas influence.

In an interview to Chinese state media, Putin praised the massive but loosely linked BRI projects.

"Yes, we see that some people consider it an attempt by the People's Republic of China to put someone under its thumb, but we see otherwise. We just see a desire for cooperation," he told state broadcaster CCTV, according to a transcript released by the Kremlin on Monday.

Putin will be among the highest-profile guests at a gathering marking the 10th anniversary of Xi's announcement of the BRI project, which has laden countries such as Zambia and Sri Lanka with heavy debt from contracts with Chinese companies to build roads, airports and other public works they could not otherwise afford. U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres has praised the Chinese policy as bringing development to neglected areas.

The gathering has also given Putin an opportunity to meet with other global leaders who have criticized the Western approach to Russia's war against Ukraine.

Speaking at a meeting with Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, whose country is a member of the European Union as well as NATO, Putin said the countries have maintained good ties despite recent tensions.

"It causes satisfaction that we have managed to preserve and develop relations with many European countries, including Hungary," Putin said at the start of the talks with Orban.

Orban, who has repeatedly criticized Western sanctions against Russia, noted that his country has remained eager to maintain ties with Russia.

"Hungary never wanted to confront Russia. Hungary always has been eager to expand contacts," Orban told Putin. Hungary has continued to pursue contacts with Russia in the nuclear power and gas energy fields despite EU sanctions.

Asked by reporters Friday about his visit, Putin said it would encompass talks on Belt and Road-related projects, which he said Moscow wants to link with efforts by an economic alliance of former Soviet Union nations mostly located in Central Asia to "achieve common development goals."

He also downplayed the impact of China's economic influence in a region that Russia has long considered its backyard and where it has worked to maintain political and military clout.

"We don't have any contradictions here, on the contrary, there is a certain synergy," Putin said.

Putin said he and Xi would also discuss growing economic ties between Moscow and Beijing in energy, high-tech and financial industries. China has also grown in importance as an export destination for Russia.

Alexander Gabuev, director of the Carnegie Russia Eurasia Center, said that from China's view, "Russia is a safe neighbor that is friendly, that is a source of cheap raw materials, that's a support for Chinese initiatives on the global stage and that's also a source of military technologies, some of those that China doesn't have."

"For Russia, China is its lifeline, economic lifeline in its brutal repression against Ukraine," Gabuev told The Associated Press.

"It's the major market for Russian commodities, it's a country that provides its currency and payment system to settle Russia's trade with the outside world — with China itself, but also with many other countries, and is also the major source of sophisticated technological imports, including dual-use goods that go into the Russian military machine."

Gabuev said that while Moscow and Beijing will be unlikely to forge a full-fledged military alliance, their defense cooperation will grow.

"Both countries are self-sufficient in terms of security and they benefit from partnering, but neither really requires a security guarantee from the other. And they preach strategic autonomy," he said.

"There will be no military alliance, but there will be closer military cooperation, more interoperability, more cooperation on projecting force together, including in places like the Arctic and more joint effort to develop a missile defense that makes the U.S. nuclear planning and planning of the U.S. and its allies in Asia and in Europe more complicated," he added.

The Chinese and Soviets were Cold War rivals for influence among left-leaning states, but China and Russia have since partnered in the economic, military and diplomatic spheres.

Just weeks before Russia's invasion of Ukraine last February, Putin met with Xi in Beijing and the sides signed an agreement pledging a "no-limits" relationship. Beijing's attempts to present itself as a neutral peace broker in Russia's war on Ukraine have been widely dismissed by the international community.

Xi visited Moscow in March as part of a flurry of exchanges between the countries. China has condemned international sanctions imposed on Russia, but hasn't directly addressed an arrest warrant issued for Putin by the International Criminal Court on charges of alleged involvement in the abductions of thousands of children from Ukraine.

## **Mourners in heavily Palestinian Chicago suburb remember Muslim boy killed as kind, energetic**

By CLAIRE SAVAGE, MELISSA PEREZ WINDER and SOPHIA TAREEN Associated Press  
BRIDGEVIEW, Ill. (AP) — Crowds of mourners in a heavily Palestinian Chicago suburb paid respects Monday to a 6-year-old Muslim boy killed in an alleged hate crime, hours after authorities revealed new

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details about the evidence used to charge the family's landlord with stabbing the child and his mother.

Wadea Al-Fayoume, who had recently had a birthday, died Saturday after being stabbed dozens of times in a brutal attack that drew condemnation from local elected officials to the White House. Authorities said the family's landlord, Joseph Czuba, was upset over the Israel-Hamas war and attacked them after the boy's mother proposed they "pray for peace."

In Bridgeview, which is home to a large and established Palestinian community, family and friends remembered Wadea as an energetic boy who loved playing games. His body was carried in a small white casket — which was at times draped with a Palestinian flag — through packed crowds.

Mosque Foundation Imam Jamal Said reflected on the boy's death during the janazah, or funeral service, but also the wider loss of life in the war between Israel and Hamas.

"Wadea is a child and he is not the only one under attack," he said, adding many "children are being slaughtered literally in the Holy Land, unfortunately, which is very sad."

Mahmoud Yousef, the boy's uncle, remembered Wadea as a typical 6-year-old who was active, playful and kind. Citing a text message from the boy's mother, who was still recovering as her son was buried, Yousef said she recalled the last words her son spoke to her after he was stabbed: "Mom, I'm fine."

"You know what, he is fine," Yousef said. "He's in a better place."

Earlier Monday, Czuba made his first court appearance on murder, attempted murder and hate crime charges. In detailing the charges Sunday, the Will County Sheriff's Office determined "both victims in this brutal attack were targeted by the suspect due to them being Muslim and the ongoing Middle Eastern conflict involving Hamas and the Israelis."

Czuba, a Plainfield resident, replied, "Yes, sir," when asked if he understood the charges and was subsequently returned to jail in Joliet, 50 miles (80.4 kilometers) southwest of Chicago. A Will County judge granted a court-appointed lawyer. The public defender's office did not immediately return messages seeking comment about the charges against him.

The boy's mother told investigators that she rents two rooms on the first floor of the Plainfield home while Czuba and his wife live on the second floor, Assistant State's Attorney Michael Fitzgerald said in a court filing.

"He was angry at her for what was going on in Jerusalem," Fitzgerald said. "She responded to him, 'Let's pray for peace.' ... Czuba then attacked her with a knife."

The boy's mother fought him off and went into a bathroom where she stayed until police arrived. Wadea, meanwhile, was in his own room, Fitzgerald said.

The mother was identified by family members as Hanaan Shahin, 32, though authorities used a different spelling for her name as well as her son's name.

On the day of the attack, police found Czuba with a cut on his forehead, sitting on the ground outside the home.

Czuba's wife, Mary, told police that her husband feared they would be attacked by people of Middle Eastern descent and had withdrawn \$1,000 from a bank "in case the U.S. grid went down," Fitzgerald said in the court document.

In Bridgeview, the boy's father briefly spoke to reporters in Arabic, saying he was trying to make sense of what happened to his son and the boy's mother. He hoped it would be a "bullet to solve the issue" in his homeland.

"I'm here as the father of the boy, not as a politician or religious scholar. I'm here as the father of a boy whose rights were violated," he said.

Community members chanted prayers in unison outside the mosque following the janazah as leaders transported the casket into a hearse. "There is no God, but God," "The martyr is beloved by God" and "God is greatest," they chanted, calls many Muslims recite in moments of grief, distress or remembrance.

At a news conference outside the mosque, speakers called for politicians and media to be responsible with their rhetoric and coverage of the Israel-Hamas war. Attendees gathered close to hear, phones recording and expressions somber.

In recent days, Jewish and Muslim groups have reported an increase of hateful rhetoric in the wake of

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the war. Several cities have stepped up police patrols.

The Justice Department said it opened a hate crime investigation into the attack.

"This horrific act of hate has no place in America, and stands against our fundamental values: freedom from fear for how we pray, what we believe, and who we are," President Joe Biden said.

## Today in History: October 18, U.S. takes possession of Alaska from Russia

By The Associated Press

Today is Wednesday, Oct. 18, the 291st day of 2023. There are 74 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Oct. 18, 1867, the United States took formal possession of Alaska from Russia.

In 1648, Boston shoemakers were authorized to form a guild to protect their interests, becoming the first American labor organization on record.

In 1892, the first long-distance telephone line between New York and Chicago was officially opened.

In 1898, the American flag was raised in Puerto Rico shortly before Spain formally relinquished control of the island to the U.S.

In 1954, Texas Instruments unveiled the Regency TR-1, the first commercially produced transistor radio.

In 1962, James D. Watson, Francis Crick and Maurice Wilkins were honored with the Nobel Prize for Medicine and Physiology for determining the double-helix molecular structure of DNA.

In 1968, the U.S. Olympic Committee suspended Tommie Smith and John Carlos for giving a "Black power" salute as a protest during a victory ceremony in Mexico City.

In 1969, the federal government banned artificial sweeteners known as cyclamates because of evidence they caused cancer in laboratory rats.

In 1972, Congress passed the Clean Water Act, overriding President Richard Nixon's veto.

In 1977, West German commandos stormed a hijacked Lufthansa jetliner on the ground in Mogadishu, Somalia, freeing all 86 hostages and killing three of the four hijackers.

In 1984, actor Jon-Erik Hexum, 26, was taken off life support six days after shooting himself in the head with a pistol loaded with a blank cartridge on the set of his TV show "Cover Up."

In 2001, CBS News announced that an employee in anchorman Dan Rather's office had tested positive for skin anthrax.

In 2010, four men snared in an FBI sting were convicted of plotting to blow up New York City synagogues and shoot down military planes with the help of a paid informant who'd convinced them he was a terror operative.

In 2012, the 2nd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in New York ruled that a federal law defining marriage as a union between a man and a woman was unconstitutional. (The following June, the Supreme Court would use that case to strike down provisions keeping legally-married same-sex couples from receiving federal benefits that were otherwise available to married couples.)

In 2018, President Donald Trump threatened to close the U.S. border with Mexico if authorities could not stop a caravan of migrants making their way from Central America.

Today's Birthdays: College and Pro Football Hall of Famer Mike Ditka is 84. Singer-musician Russ Giguere is 80. Actor Joe Morton is 76. Actor Pam Dawber is 73. Author Terry McMillan is 72. Writer-producer Chuck Lorre is 71. Gospel singer Vickie Winans is 70. Director-screenwriter David Twohy (TOO'-ee) is 68. International Tennis Hall of Famer Martina Navratilova is 67. Actor Jon Lindstrom is 66. International Hall of Fame boxer Thomas Hearns is 65. Actor Jean-Claude Van Damme is 63. Jazz musician Wynton Marsalis is 62. Actor Vincent Spano is 61. Singer Nonchalant is 56. Former tennis player Michael Stich (sh-teek) is 55. Actor Joy Bryant is 49. Rock musician Peter Svensson (The Cardigans) is 49. Actor Wesley Jonathan is 45. R&B singer-actor Ne-Yo is 44. Country singer Josh Gracin is 43. Olympic gold medal skier Lindsey Vonn is 39. Jazz singer-musician Esperanza Spalding is 39. Actor-model Freida Pinto is 39. Actor Zac Efron is 36. Actor Joy Lauren is 34. U.S. Olympic and WNBA basketball star Brittney Griner is 33. TV personality Bristol Palin is 33. Actor Tyler Posey is 32. Actor Toby Regbo is 32.